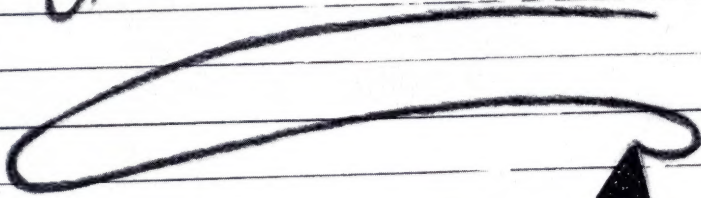


the circle



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A Note On Style

The variety of approaches to writing and design in this issue reflects the *Circle's* function as a laboratory publication. Although each piece was reviewed by staff members and representatives of the Editorial Board, the appearance of any article, story, poem, drawing, or photograph does not necessarily indicate unanimous critical approval.

The Circle wishes to thank all the students and faculty members whose help made this issue possible.

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'Carpetbaggers'

By Rick Burton

There has been lots of talk about the New South in the last few decades and most Southerners acknowledge -- some more happily than others -- the change to hit the region. But what about those Yankees? Has their view of the South changed?



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bathompson

Alabama felt a magic descending, spreading, long ago. Since then it has been a land with a spell on it—not a good spell, always...It is difficult to translate this feeling into words, yet almost every visitor to this land has known it and felt in some degree what I felt with increasing wonder during the six years I lived there...But the stranger is more apt to realize that sorcery is at work on these people and know that the land on which they live is its apprentice.

—*Stars Fell on Alabama*, by Carl Carmer

Is Alabama an enchanted land? After six years of living and traveling throughout Alabama, Harvard History Professor Carl Carmer proclaimed it “not a state, but a strange country.” He said that the “malevolent landscape—lush and foreboding—broods over (Alabama) bending its people to strange purpose. He theorized that the spell, not always a good one as he observed, which influences Alabama, could have had any of several origins. Possibly from the curse that Chief Tuscaloosa imposed on the land. Or even more likely, from a rain of stars that covered Alabama for a moment, yet was graphically remembered by Alabama citizens for decades. Perhaps in that one climactic moment, the region was transformed into a unique, magical place. Thus from that incident comes the title of Carmer’s book about his experiences in the South: *Stars Fell on Alabama*.

In the book, he points out unique qualities of the region and its inhabitants. And he presents an incisive picture of Alabama in the late 1920s and early 1930s.

The question is, is Alabama the same unique land and culture today? Forty-five years after Carmer’s book was published, do Northerners (“Strangers” as the author would call them) still feel similarly?

I interviewed a number of Northerners. They varied in sex, age, and length of Auburn residency, but they all had one common quality. That is, they had lived in the North for most of their lives. Like Carmer, they are newcomers to the South, who can perhaps look at the situation objectively.

In his observation, Carmer emphasized qualities exclusive to Alabama, or at least to the South. Then he contrasted them with those of his native region. I interviewed along the same lines. Therefore, a comparison is made, between

quotes taken from *Stars Fell on Alabama* and statements made by newcomer students and faculty in Auburn.

IS THERE SPECIAL SOUTHERN KINDNESS?

Speaking of his arrival in Alabama, Carmer said: *About an hour later, there was a rap at my door. ‘Here’s a bunch of flowers for you, sir.’ They were roses of many kinds, wrapped in newspaper, and there was a card—‘From some people who are glad you are here.’ I have never known who sent them. It might have been any one of the hundreds of families I later came to know, for it was a typical gesture. No people are more perfectly master of the unexpected and kindly.*

“Yea, they’re a lot friendlier,” replied Sallie, a New Jersey native. “Like in the stores, people say, ‘Come back now, ya’ here,’ and they really mean it.”

“There’s a lot more respect here, I think,” said Jane, a Pennsylvania girl. “Like toward adults or in schools. There’s just a lot more respect for old

attitudes. Up North, it’s hard to meet people, but here it’s not at all. I’ve gotten used to just speaking to people I don’t know. If people don’t agree with me, they’re crazy.”

MANNERS

...the young in Alabama always seem precociously well-mannered.

Bob, who is from Jersey City, said, “People seem like they have a lot of manners, like toward older people. They’re more respectful of older people. It may just seem that way, but I always notice the way they say ‘ma’am’ and ‘sir’.”

“Yes, manners here are much different,” said the Michigan professor, “like their practice of saying ‘ma’am’ or ‘sir’. I’ve also found the students here to be less challenging, more docile.”

Still others hold that there is no difference in manners.

SOCIAL BEHAVIOR

No people in the world give more thought to social enjoyment than the Alabamians. The early afternoon finds most of Tuscaloosa’s businessmen on

Is Alabama an enchanted land? After six years of living and traveling throughout Alabama, Harvard history Professor Carl Carmer proclaimed it ‘not a state, but a strange country.’

and new ways.” To cite an example she said, “Like the way guys act to girls. Opening up doors and things.”

A faculty member from Michigan said, “People seem kind and glad to help you out. But it takes a while for them to really warm up to you.”

“Yes, people are friendly,” stated Tracy, a Pennsylvania native, “but they’re not as sincere. Up North, friendships are stronger. Here, it’s shallow. It’s based more on looks. I guess it’s that way because of the way people are brought up.” So according to her, the kindness facade of Alabamians seems to be a hindrance to a truthful, deep relationship by preventing certain emotions from surfacing.

A teacher from Maine remarked, “Yes, but whether one enjoys it is another question. In this situation, people have two presentations. There is a public expression of interest, but is it really appropriate?”

Jim, who is from Boston, was confident in his response. “One hundred percent. There’s no comparison in

golf courses and tennis courts, even when business might be improved by closer attention. In the evening the town is alive with small impromptu parties except on the nights of larger, more formal affairs.

“Yes, people are very social. For example, Montgomery and Birmingham are centered around country clubs. Another reason is there’s not much else to do,” opined Jim.

Similarly, Tracy commented, “Up North, people go wild. Here, they enjoy life more, they aren’t rushed. They go home from work or school and the rest of the evening is free to do what they want.”

“Well,” said Bob, “I don’t see a big difference, except here maybe there is more of an opportunity for leisure. Like swimming. Here, it is so easy to go to Chewacla.”

GOSSIP

The constant social chatter dealing in personalities at first annoys and bores the stranger. Gradually, however, as he picks up on the threads of a relationship

through which it sometime seems that the entire state is bound into one family, he becomes not only tolerant but an eager participant.

Laura, from Ohio, disagreed with Carmer and said, "Well, all girls gossip, no matter where they are."

"Well, everybody gossips. Like, I've always wanted to catch up on the scoop," said Jane.

But Tracy said, "Yea, everyone is nosier. Like I have grandparents in Fairfax. And, there, everyone is in everybody's business."

"Yes, I think they do gossip more down here," held Jim. "Up North, there's too many people to keep up with. Also, in the North there's more corruption. But here there is a mainstream and everybody tries to keep up."

The Maine teacher looked at the tendency to "gossip" from a much different perspective. "One thing," he said, "that is nearly exclusive to the South is the tremendous language skill that I've noticed, particularly among the students. They have different speech

Marsha, a Jersey girl, said, "Yes, definitely, and girls want to settle and have three kids by the time they're twenty. I notice sales clerks around that are married—and they're so young!"

Jane commented on the status of Southern girls in romance. "I think of most of the girls around here as Southern Belles. They're so sheltered and all they live for is dates. They won't walk out of their dorm without looking beautiful. And you shouldn't be looking for somebody who is just impressed with looks. But everybody goes by the tradition. Like, for example, I went to a fraternity party dressed casually, just wearing jeans. I had an awful time and came home nearly crying. The next night, I dressed up and rolled my hair and went back to the same fraternity. I had a great time. See, I conformed to the ways and was accepted."

When asked if she liked playing the conservative role of a woman in the South, Tracy replied, "Well, it's nice but I might not want it as a permanent thing. But I like the change. It's nice to

fraternity parties, I hate to hang around with the girls. But I like the guys, and lately I've just been like one of the guys, but that's fine because I don't want to be one of the girls."

Bob, unlike the others, saw little contrast. "I don't see any difference with Southern girls, except maybe they're a little friendlier."

RELIGION

...we came in sight of a weathered church so like the one we had visited for the Sacred Harp Singing that its differing details escape my memory.

"There's so many churches in Auburn! It seems like everywhere I look, I see one," commented Marsha.

Richard, who is from Maryland, said, "I've found there is more religion. And it's more of a ritual."

"I think such phenomenon at Rat Riley are spectacular. Religious activity, here, takes various forms," says the Maine faculty member.

INTELLECT AND CULTURE

Gossip, dancing, swimming, love-making, even religious observance—each

'The girls here get on my nerves,' confided Marsha, 'especially sorority girls. It seems like they're not here for degrees, unless it's the M.R.S. degree, and so many of them are Daddy's girls.'

forms for different situations. They might, for example, speak standard English to me. Then they walk out on the concourse and speak in the colloquial drawl. They are very good at participating in dramatized situations. They can graphically convey a situation or tell a story, often funny stories." He saw the average Alabamian as a "fluid character," able to fit more than one role. When I asked if this was dangerous, for fear of being "artificial," he replied, "Well maybe we are too concerned with being consistent. Other things are more important, such as the shams and strategies that we must have to survive."

ROMANCE

As for love-making, it is the accepted basis of all social activity.

A dance in the summer time will bring the young people within a 50-mile radius to crowd the floor. University students pay fabulous prices running into thousands of dollars to bring second-rate Northern bands.

Laura commented, "Yes, people are more concerned with romance, but it is more conservative."

get doors opened for me."

"Yes," said the woman from Michigan, "girls are much more traditional. The idea of the wife subservient to the husband is very prevalent." When asked if she felt this was harmful, she replied, "Yes. When I saw the yearbook, I was shocked by all of the portraits of school queens. This over-emphasis on good looks and social acceptance, I think, is harmful. It seems to take up a large part of the students' lives."

"There's a lot of difference in the girls," said Jim. "they oppress themselves a little. They don't have any big goals, such as a career. But instead they look forward to marriage. But they do seem friendlier. Up North, women are just people, and a lot of them have big careers, but sometimes they seem standoffish."

"The girls here get on my nerves," confided Marsha, "especially sorority girls. It seems like they're not here for degrees, unless it's the M.R.S., and so many of them are Daddy's girls. Like I heard one saying 'My Daddy just bought me a new Monte Carlo.' When I go to

has its niche in the structure of the day. But not reading and contemplation.

Is the Southerner, because of this, shallower intellectually?

"You might say that," said Marsha. "People up North are more aware of the current, like events and fashions. Here, most of the news is local or around town."

"There's not much interest as far as things going on in the world. Like when the Guyana thing happened, I hardly heard about it," said Marsha. "Also, there is no kind of fashion around here. You go to Gayfer's and all they have is preppy clothes."

The Michigan professor commented, "There is not as much national reference here. People find it hard to consider outer-region jobs."

The instructor from Maine noted, "I often give a questionnaire to my students inquiring what books they have read recently. Not many had read non-required books. Many students don't seem to be reading." She also noted, "Students down here should be more interested in culture. Forum is an

example. Sometime they act so rude at the very events that are intended to broaden their interests."

THE BLACK MAN

I felt sick and I wondered where I was. Whipping negro servants died out after Uncle Tom's Cabin and the War Between the States, I assured myself. This was only a nightmare. Then the door opened and in a moment Henry came out carrying the water pail in his right hand. His left hand held his cap with which he made futile dabs at his streaming eyes.

"If you'd only let me talk to yuh, boss, yuh wouldn't have to whoop me."

Carmer sees the Alabamian as an extreme racist who imposes gross injustices on the Black people.

Sallie felt strongly about the situation. "Blacks are kept in their place here. There's just this stereotype of a dumb nigger. And everybody acts like it's before the Civil War. Up North, there are more minorities and they're treated on a more equal basis. There, you wouldn't think anything of working with a Black, or being good friends with him. Here there's White and Blacks and they're kept separate. But the Black people here seem to be more willing to accept this. Some aren't very aggressive, maybe because of the way they've been put down. It's like they ended the violence of the 1960s and settled back into place."

Similarly, Jane noted, "There's a big difference here (in racial attitudes). But here, I've contacted more Black people than ever before. Why is there so much static?"

Contrasting with the last statement, Tracy said, "Well, in saying 'nigger,' yes there is a difference. But Blacks seem different here. I think if they apply themselves, they are treated equally."

Laura noted, "Yes, the Southerner is very much (a racist). Up North, 'nigger' is a dirty word. It bothers me when people here say it. It's an insult. Like at the Coliseum pool, there was a Black swimming and I hadn't even noticed. Until the girl I was with said, 'look, there's a nigger in here'."

"I've found attitudes vary with time," said the Maine teacher. "They go up and down. But, at the same time, I don't see much difference in attitudes on racial issues between the North and the South. Only in the South, they are more visible—more readily expressed. I've seen many locals express a racist position then turn around and give fair

treatment."

But Jim thought differently. "It hasn't changed one bit. Blacks (in the South) are oppressed terribly. In the North, they've made a stake in the community, there's no prejudice. But hostility is here. Like recently, I worked in Tupelo, Mississippi. I had a Black roommate. There was a lot of KKK trouble and I got so scared, I left at 4:00 in the morning."

Marsha stated, "No doubt there is more racism here. But Blacks here are darker in skin color. In the North there's more intermarriage between the races. I was talking to a Black man one day, and I sensed tension. Maybe it was my imagination, but still there is a definite separation of the races. The only time they mix is in sports."

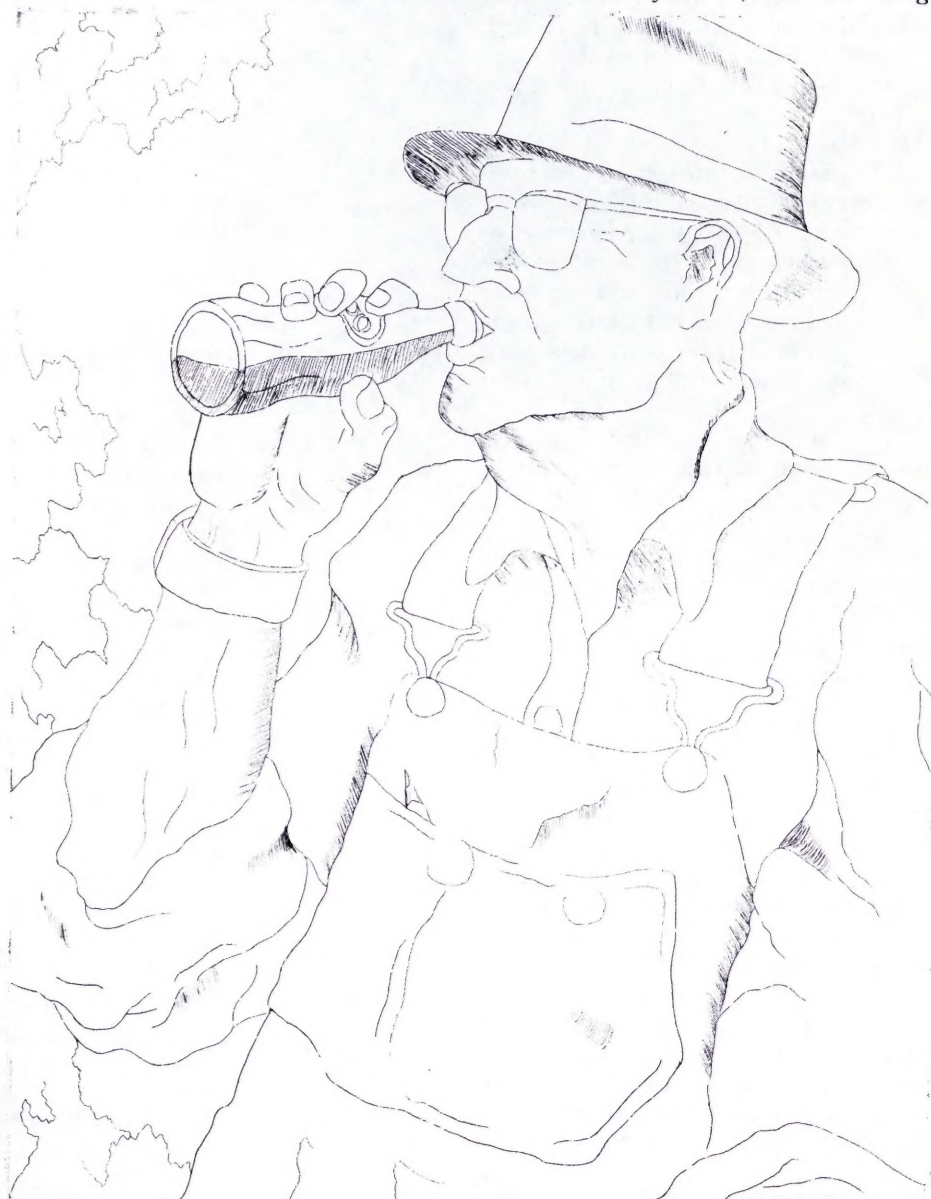
"Well, I think the Black man is still rather scared," offered Richard. "Maybe

that is why they seem to lack aggressiveness."

John, a native of Wisconsin, felt like there is racism in the North as well, only in a different form. "It is permissible for Blacks here to be close to Whites, they just aren't allowed to rise. It's all right to have a Black maid living in your house, or riding in the car, close to you, but it is not all right for a Black to rise to a position of power. In the North, it is the opposite. A Black can rise. For example, the mayor of Detroit is Black. But Blacks and Whites are not close. The neighborhoods are segregated."

AN EXPERIENCE

It is hard for me to believe that I lived in Alabama for six years...Like a character in imaginative fiction. I felt that I stepped into a past time that lives and is concurrent with today...I know that since I left them, little has changed



etching by Shirley Burnett

beneath those incomplete heavens from which the stars fell.

"It's pretty much a total experience," said Sallie. At first I felt like an outcast, but now I feel like a part of it. It's really a state of its own, so many differences. It's nice though in its way."

"It's a neat place. I love it," commented Jane. I asked if she would live here permanently. "I don't think so. It's hard to say. But I would like to raise my children here. Away from some of the bad things in the North."

"Things are slower. Everything's slower. They enjoy life more, they are not rushed. But I like the North and the South," said Tracy.

"It's a completely different country. I didn't know there could be so many differences. I had never had iced tea or chicken and dumplings before I came here," stated Jim. When asked if he would live here permanently, he replied, "Yes, there's no doubt in my mind. I'm never going North, except to visit. I love it here."

AFTERWORD

Of course, there are certain drawbacks presented by the sample of people interviewed. For the most part, reactions were all favorable to the South, which makes sense. The people who favor the South, remain here, but someone who may have presented a more pessimistic view could have already returned to the North.

Also, it is possible that the ideas presented on certain issues, such as racism, are not valid. Racism is a sensitive topic, and the consensus may have been warped to one side since I did not interview any Blacks from the North.

Also, many of the subjects were limited to Auburn in their exposure to the South.

But regardless of the possible inaccuracies, we did obtain an answer. Yes, according to our limited findings, the South is still, today, the land of which Carmer spoke.

The spell of the stars has not yet passed. And the Southerner (or Alabamian) is still seen as the unusual and conservative, but certainly not always good, character which he is reputed to be.

Is Alabama "an enchanted land?" Perhaps we ought not to go that far. But the "hovering enchantment" still exists. And its influence is very apparent every day, for Alabama is indeed unique.

Ruins of Bulow's Sugar Mill

I
Brown feet pad softly worn clay paths
from a springhouse's verdant chill,
bringing back cool water in pails
for slaves working Bulow's sugar mill.

Slaves, cutting cane, stoking fires, know
Hell as quick iron-toothed steam power
that gnaws stalks. Dark cane juice flows,
thickens to syrup, cools out sugar.

Hogsheads age sugar; fleeing molasses
is caught as rummakers' money,
while slaves swinging blades, singing, taste
bitterness of sugar, and of milk and honey.

II

Furnace chimneys appear above all ruin,
their stones chiseled to fit tight in order
as resistant towers, covered in grey lichen
now, weakening, loosening under moribund mortar.

So towers few, betrayed by frail cement,
yielding to a more ruinous state, crumble
with foundations lost, a tomb of pure spirit
mistaken by outsiders for mere rubble.

—Mark Willis

The cold attacked sterling lungs.
Hands seemingly frozen
Secure in my navy jacket and in being a son.
In time of years ago I saw an old man,
in front of me on an embankment dividing a museum city,
Who looked as if he were caught in another century,
Leaning over heavy black iron railing, alone.
A blank stare directed austerely at metallic water,
And I thought of seasons slipping into seasons,
And the autumn of his life dawning upon him.
Sure that he was thinking,
In the span of sadness in his eyes,
Of love that had waned, memories he must disdain.
Sure that he had seen all the pain; two wars,
Sure that he had been all too young, too restrained.
Cold years ago, when I walked him by
And the river rushed ceaselessly to sea
And I to confirmation, commencement, and complacency.
I'm sure that he lies in some grave,
Shaded by scratchy trees much older than you or I.
Where leaves catch the rainfall
And the wind allows it to descend,
To earth for the second time in one day.
But he will fall no more.

—Eric Regh



lithograph by Danny Coker

Ritual

By Judy Sheppard

After she had written the letter to her parents—a breezy letter, describing the weekend in Florida and her unaccustomed extravagance there—she bowed her head over her typewriter and wept. It was a sloppy business, a catharsis she allowed herself regularly and reluctantly, like her periods, and was glad to have over with. Then she glummed on a stamp and sealed the envelope for the morning mail.

At her side was a stack of books to be methodically scanned. They had been picked up this afternoon at a booksale, enticing her with their promisingly academic titles—a collection of Greek tragedies, criticism on major American writers, an anthology of minor Victorian poets. Should she begin gleaning them for material for her high school classes, or should she grade tests? It was a bleak choice. Jane picked up her journal, with none of the past days left blank, and began to write.

Her tears were just a comedown from the days at the beach, and spurred, too, by the weather. Spring here was glorious—an almost embarrassing extravaganza of plum and peach and azalea; the air was soft and cool, the sky high and pure, the sun benevolent. It made one yearn, she wrote melodramatically. It was mocking weather, perfection in nature flaunting inanity in life. Jane drew a line carefully through these maudlin remarks and lit a cigarette.

The shore had been nice. She had gone there with Marsha, who taught art at Jane's school and was a thin, energetic, effervescent redhead, disgustingly smooth of temperament. It offended Jane that her friend did not suffer as she did, did not battle with depressions and the too-clear view of life's inadequacies which she contended with on a dreary daily basis. Since accepting the job teaching high school English to wait for a more suitable upper-level position,

it had become routine for Jane to measure her mood every morning, the way some take their temperatures or step on scales. Jane knew now that early good spirits were a danger signal: better the medium of tolerance and dislike, when she dressed slowly and sat with her coffee over the crossword, putting off driving to Brookwood as long as possible. Then she could float in anonymously with the giggling hordes of students carrying state-owned textbooks and flashy, cheap magazines. Those days were easier: they promised no certain disappointment, as did mornings when the dawn around her quiet suburb was painfully clear and lovely, when the scent of the wisteria twining around her little wooden porch pierced her with memories of hope, when she shook back her thick, pale hair and smiled in the mirror with approval and encouragement. No, better days that began like essays branded "C" and forgotten. Brilliant introductions led to boring conclusions, or bad conclusions, or no conclusions at all, the day stretching into night while she read her books and papers and anesthetic novels till she slept with glasses on, propped on her printed pillow like an invalid.

Jane paused in her smoky reverie. She had not checked the mail! Bearing in her books, she had let that small ritual slip.

Though rituals were her basis of life, small ceremonies performed with great care and regularity. She went out on the porch in the spring twilight, trying not to see it: it was too lovely; she was too alone. The small black box held the telephone bill and nothing else. Almost desperately, she turned deliberately and faced the sky; it was now dark blue bleaching at the edges, and the moon, early and new, hung like a feather above the opposite house. It *is* a mockery, she thought, redeeming her grossly sentimental journal entry. It is cruel to parade indifferent beauty.

Like Marsha's. Marsha, wiry and electric, had the bones and eyes of the suffering artist, but was serene and unruffled as a puddle, and perhaps as deep. She was happy with her boyfriends, who were legion. Jane had never dated indiscriminately, but Marsha was generous with her company, going out with used-car salesmen and interns and artists and athletes, telling Jane stories of discotechque evenings and sexual peccadilloes that made Jane wince alternately with envy and contempt. All considered, she was Jane's best friend, coaxing her out of her selective shell into

dark, gleaming bars where they flirted with tanned, arrogant executives and surreptitious young fathers and beautiful, sensual bums. Yet in the midst of flattery and attentions, Jane most felt her strange solitude and dissatisfaction—if not here, in the midst of such quiet splendor as this perfect evening. She shut her door carefully on both thoughts and the incredibly lovely, melancholy spring.

At school the next day she and Marsha lunched sparsely on cafeteria salads and rehashed the weekend, to the shared entertainment of the grouped young teachers sharing their fare. "I'm really depressed," Marsha announced to the table, concluding her tales with her usual outrageous exuberance. "I think Jane and I will have a party at her place Saturday night, to become reoriented to Morrisville. Robert, you'll come of course," she added to the most sedate and new of the teachers.

"Well," said Jane as eyes turned expectantly to her. "Of course. You're all welcome."

"Marvelous!" Marsha crowed as she propelled Jane with her usual energy towards their classrooms. "I know you've had your eye on Robert Rice for months." Rice was the history teacher, displaced like Jane in the public schools, and object of the schoolgirls' fantasies. "But for God's sake, don't ask David. Don't fuss too much, either—wine and cheese is all we ask." She winked and sailed on.

It had been a long time since Jane had heard from David. She still unconsciously listened for the late, lengthy phone calls that interrupted her quota of sleep. She told herself that she had lost nothing, of course, that he wanted too much from her private soul, and that she missed him only because even illusions may be comforting, and leave voids when they go. Still, she could usually shut a door on her thoughts of him, like the evening beauty, like Emily Dickinson's soul, selecting her society. The reviews in the *New Yorker* were much safer company, and were wittier. She had little trouble sinking into the comfortable ether of intellectual print.

She talked to Robert Rice later that day; he was attractive, with a scholarly appeal Jane particularly liked: like the intelligent, introspective graduate students she'd dated while she worked on her M.A. He was dark and lean and interestingly distant, though he had odd collections, some of which Jane wanted

to see: antique maps and globes, small plaster busts of explorers and great historical women.

"It sounds fine," he said with a surprisingly easy smile. "I've lived the monk's life long enough. Shall I bring wine?"

"That would be nice," Jane agreed. "I live—"

"I know where you live," he said quietly, and the bell rang to send students to engulf and choke the hallways. She went to her class to teach mythology for four hours more to four different seas of faces, speaking of Helen of Troy and the gods and Paris as she mentally served wine and cheese and floated about in a pale caftan to somber, muted music.

At nine o'clock Saturday night, the younger teachers and Marsha's heterogeneous friends gathered in Jane's small, shining house, slowly getting high on cold white wine or the bottles of vermouth and vodka they'd brought, smoking and talking in muffled cur-

First Place, Sigma Tau Delta Fiction Contest

rents. Robert Rice arrived slightly late, in a faded, beautifully embroidered work-shirt, and brought wine and a big wooden bowl of roadside stand apples, polished and golden.

"My kids are right," he said as Jane selected a smooth yellow globe and tasted. "I overheard the football star say you not only taught Helen of Troy, you are Helen of Troy."

"Do I look that weary?" she asked, laughing.

"Not at all. But as you know from my collections, the ancient and time-honored appeal to me."

"Perhaps this then is the judgment of Paris," she said, and quoted a poem, wondering what bemused, puzzled kind of look he would give her.

"Tennyson's 'Oenone,' isn't it?" he said, smiling at her surprise. "What parts of me aren't medieval are Victorian."

"How wonderful! I thought you were a historian!"

"Majoring in English as an undergraduate," he said. "And monks read a lot."

That was perhaps the moment Jane regarded him with new interest, listening with quiet approval to his articulate discussions of the deficiencies of public schools and his theory that history and literature were inextricably entwined and should be viewed as such. It was like breathing again after stale conversations, like the long arguments and discourses held in graduate assistants' offices; she was exhilarated and it was she, now, who was held bemused. (Marsha, gathering up ashtrays after the party, was emphatically impressed. "Of course, the coach has a much better body," she reminded her. "Next party," said Jane.)

He was an interesting man. He was rather intense, Jane thought, sometimes



linocut by Robbie Whyte

regarding her curiously, as if not wholly impressed. This offended and puzzled her, but also intrigued her. It was not long before she inspected the ancient globes on his apartment shelves, yellowed spheres with strange raised masses on them, and ran her fingers over the small busts, savoring their cool, complete smoothness. Things completed, carefully done, admirable for ages, held her greatest respect.

She forgot David. She never had trouble forgetting old lovers, once the habit was broken; the tenacles of her affairs never bound her very strongly, while her grasp on herself, her cherishing of her private spaces, remained sure and close. She was as cool and complete and whole as Robert's statues and globes, except on those rare times when she wept over carefully light letters or empty evenings or beauty that baffled and bit her: her Botticelli prints or her Bach. These things were easier to dismiss before they did damage to that perfect surface when there was a man around. She rarely paused over the dusks now. She slept well at night.

"You're falling for this guy," Marsha said in a voice of ominous prophecy.

"Cassandra, I presume?"

"Don't snobberize me, please," Marsha snapped; she dealt in the literature of Victoria Holt. "You're too wrapped up in this mythology mess. And you're getting into something."

"You mean, because you don't like him, I'm getting 'into something.'"

"I like him," Marsha answered. "But he's too serious to be so young. Besides, I wouldn't think he's good for your ego, always busy with something wonderfully intellectual and above us all."

Jane smiled to cover her irritation. They both were immersed in learned things, weren't they? After all, this job was merely a waiting room for them; and, too, Marsha had just trespassed on her silent fears, the reason why she immersed herself in impersonal, perfected literature. Marsha was waiting for a rebuttal: "Well," Jane said, "he has some articles in rough draft."

"He thinks he's too good for you."

"For you, you mean," Jane said coldly. "He thinks a great deal of me."

"Okay, okay," Marsha said, backing away carefully. "He just looks at you funny sometimes, like when you quote things at us."

"He likes me," Jane said in a final tone.

Marsha, undisturbed, acquiesced.

"Well, why not?" she agreed indifferently. "You're probably a terrific lay."

These remarks were part of what Jane liked best about Marsha; they ended painful conversations on completely absurd and meaningless notes. They laughed together, and Marsha picked up the cue to tell of another hedonistic fling.

Easter was approaching—the first holiday during Robert's duration with Jane, she thought, and therefore worthy of commemoration. Jane observed many annual events; they had a simplicity, a regularity, that satisfied her, and this one was an ancient one, even better. She sat for Marsha as she molded a bust of Jane for Robert: a rather strange idea, but rather appealing, the idea of being shelved with Joan of Arc and Mary Queen of Scots and Helen. It was a gift that Robert could not fail to appreciate. Meanwhile, she completed her section on mythology and no longer quoted Sophocles or even Edith Hamilton, except in her journal.

Spring was aging into summer, she noticed on Easter Eve, and paused in her back yard to observe the ceremony of its passing: slow roses were beginning to show in the hedge, the cool days were hot now at noon. The neighbors' dogwood that earlier stood like a thick white candle was subsiding now into green. The scene was slightly melancholy; Jane went in to wrap the completed bust, a very good likeness—for all Marsha's outlets of men and society, her artistic energy always had excellent results—and waited for Robert to arrive. They were going to a sunrise service the next morning, Easter Sunday.

That night after a movie they had a steak supper and discussed the film, a much-hailed historical work with beautiful photography and polished actors. They had commented on the professional perfection of the film and had received their plates when Robert asked:

"Did you like the movie?"

"Oh, yes!" Jane was surprised; perhaps she had forgotten the little rite of thanks? "It was excellent."

"Technically, of course."

"Yes, very well done."

"Didn't it get to you at all?" Robert asked, leaning toward her with a sudden intensity. "Besides the cast and the landscape, didn't it move you?"

"Sorry," said Jane, confused and angry. "Did I forget to cry?"

He looked at her quietly and smiled. "Tears are not required," he said in his

usual voice. "How is your steak?"

"Very well done," Jane answered, smiling coldly. He is a strange man, she thought; what does he want of me? Certainly not the unbarring of dark thoughts that David demanded—not this remote, faintly other-worldly man! She decided to forgive, however—her comfortable way of erasing painful thoughts surfacing again—when as they danced he moved back just a little to say: "You're too beautiful, you know. You're not quite real." She smiled her most perfect smile then, wondering if he were readying for a proposal, wondering what she would say.

They went to the service at dawn, neither from religious motives; Jane went for its mixture of spiritual and pagan elements, its color and antiquity that pleased her, like Bacchalian carvings. She had refused any religion since noticing it required the extension of oneself to others and to some vastly remote other being or space, acknowledging more than the small perfect sphere of individual existence. It was lovely, too; a ceremony concluding as the audience pinned flowers brought in a large chickenwire cross, which finally assumed brilliant beauty. ("It was beautiful, wasn't it?" Jane asked as they walked to the car. "Yes," he answered, looking at her face under the circle of her pale round hat. "Very beautifully done.")

There was an air of waiting, expectancy—perhaps, Jane thought nervously, even portent—around their breakfast table. If he wanted some answer, why didn't he ask a question? Lately he had assumed an odd posture of quiet scrutiny, watching her thoughtfully, seeming surprised sometimes when she broke: a silence and spoke. At any rate, this was the best time for the gift, to break the glittering veneer of well-bred, inexplicable ice that was closing in; so after Robert had settled into a chair with the Sunday papers, Jane went to a closet where she'd hidden the bust and brought the box to him.

"I have something for you," she said, placing it gracefully in his lap.

"Do you?" he said, slanting up at her a look she couldn't quite read: surprise, certainly, hope, doubt? Jane leaned on the back of his chair, secure in his pleasure and certainty of his delight, as he pulled the small, cool white object from its sawdust, blowing specks away, and regarding the bust with a quiet intense face.

"Do you like it?" Jane asked finally, interrupting what seemed to be a reverie. "Jane," he said, not looking at her, "why this?"

"Why, to add to your collection," she answered gaily, looking at the perfect likeness with a smile: the cool smooth white texture of the plaster, the prettily frozen smile, the only-slightly disturbingly empty eyes.

"I see," he answered at last, and carefully reburied the bust in its mounds of shavings. "It's very like you, Jane. Notice how cold it is, how beautiful, and how—aloof and mocking it looks, lying there in its little casket."

"You don't like it? But I thought—"

He rose, leaving her to balance herself on the chair, and spoke in a kind, absent voice, pocketing his glasses, gathering up his paper. "Certainly I do. Any collector of relics would. The problem is, Jane, not that it isn't like you, but that it's so *much* like you—or vice versa; I've gotten so confused by twin images of my lovely, cool, faraway Jane that I can hardly tell which is the original." He shrugged into his jacket, talking on as if to himself while Jane stood transfixed, mute. "I really don't have any desire to worship at a shrine, Jane, or place you in a museum with other great, dead ladies, or on my shelf where you can be in the company you feel you deserve. I'm sorry, Jane. I

have absolutely no wish to admire you from afar, and I'm damned if I can get close to you."

He left the box on the floor; where the marble head tilted weirdly in its box, and went out with a quiet click of the door. "This is vicious and stupid," Jane said finally to the empty house.

Afterwards, she boxed the bust to send to her parents, who would proudly display it in her father's den, among his collector's books and stuffed deerhead and mounted fish and fowl. And then, with eyes carefully averted from the clear cruel beauty of the day, and even though it was Sunday, she went out to check the mail.

Villanelle (for an overly logical lover)

No poem she holds, no passionate word
Complacent dissector of love without qualm
For though she traps, her heart will not be lured

Heart so cleansed 'til sterile, touched
Neither by caress nor lover's psalm
For no poem she holds, no passionate word

Within rigid reason find her love interred
Its selfishness sketched on unscarred palms
For though she traps, her heart will not be lured

Constrained her emotions are conferred
Miserly, as throwing beggars alms
And no poem she holds, no passionate word

Suppliants waste words not heard
Swirling storm winds around her calm
For though she traps, her heart will not be lured

Onto the rage she rubs no balm
Complacent dissector of love without qualm
No poem she holds, no passionate word
For though she traps, her heart will not be lured.

—M.H. Anderson

Atlas Shrugged

Atlas shrugged to tell the world
In all his thoughts defining;
The situation pressed him so
He found himself resigning.
And Kim, he shouted out for her
As if she were his savior,
And gleefully she kissed my cheek
To witness his behavior.
'Ah, c'est la vie,' he thought at last
And sighed in vast depression,
Then taking Kim, he smiled at me
That I might learn a lesson.

—Mike Donahue

salvaging the plants

the eggs
(having been cracked)
float face up in a bowl.
fingers of bacon snap in the skillet.

(during the night
the alabama air
lost its warmth as quickly
as a smooth stone falls
through still water
and she woke me up
at dawn
to help transport the plants—
hanging like lanterns
on the front porch—
inside.)

meanwhile miranda's face
hovers in the bubble bath,
watched only by the mirror.
she's a beautiful woman
but she stutters
if she speaks. to me.

—A.J. Wright

Vis-a'-Vis

Close whispers and a light through the window,
invite my shadow to enter you now.

I anticipate your warmth and rise,
quivering, like the dark tree limbs against
the wall. My heat opens you like a wound.
Strange the way the wind rushes in my hair
like the mane of a horse: mounting falling

the way the lake is still under the clouds
that move the moon—one of us is dreaming.
I wake to find your pillow white, empty
and a new air i breathe quickly.
I turn and look up into your wild eyes.

—Ken Taylor

J.P. Kaetz's Literary Figure Mixed Drink Guide



I was musing idly at my desk one day (an activity I enjoy almost as much as filling my navel with Alka-Seltzer and immersing myself in a full bathtub) over the idea of why certain famous restaurants in New York and other such cities name some of their dishes after famous movie stars. I then realized that I had never heard of them naming dishes after famous literary figures. After my initial shock over this realization had passed I determined that I would create a monument to some choice figures by linking their names to mixed drinks, both old standards and a few new concoctions. The choice of alcohol as a medium seemed somehow fitting at that moment. Here is the result of my labor.

The Samuel Coleridge Lift

1 oz. Tawny Port
2 oz. El Arafat's Prize Opium
Twist of Lemon

Mix with ice and drink while strumming a dulcimer.

The Joyce Kilmer Delight

2 oz. Creme de Menthe (Green)
2 tblsp. powdered sugar
1 oz. Maple Syrup

Shake with ice, strain into a highball glass, fill with carbonated water. Tastes best when bolted down quickly, without stopping closely to examine the contents.

The A.E. Housman

1 tsp. Angostura Bitters
1 tsp. Abbott's Aged Bitters
1 tsp. Peychaud's Bitters
1 tsp. Orange Bitters
Juice of 1 lemon
2 oz. Dry Gin

Shake with ice and pour into bathtub. Mix 300 more and pour into bathtub. Wallow in the mixture for eight hours.

The F. Scott Fitzgerald Pink Squirrel

1 oz. Creme de Noyaux
1 tblsp. Creme de Cacao
1 tblsp. light sweet cream

Shake with ice and strain into glass. Grasp glass lightly, lovingly, gazing deeply into its being as you draw it slowly toward your waiting lips. Hesitate for one breathless moment, then drink deeply of its cold sweetness. Do this for years and die young.



The Sylvia Plath Gin Fizz

Juice of 1 lemon
 1 tsp. powdered sugar
 2 oz. Dry Gin
 1 bottle of tranquilizers or sleeping pills

Shake all ingredients together, pour in highball glass, fill with carbonated water and drink in extreme proximity to a gas oven.

The James Joyce Jumble

2 ozqt. Vodrubourgisheort
 2 dastsp. Bitlimon
 Shith crice. Serith anolimond.

Dylan Thomas Punch

1 qts. Gin
 2 qts. Bourbon
 2 bottles Champagne
 1 pint Rum
 2 bottles Sherry
 1 qt. Vodka

Mix all ingredients in a tin bucket. Decorate with ferns and an olive. Serves one.

Hemingway Bull Shot

2 oz. Vodka
 3 oz. Chilled Beef Bouillon
 1 dash Tabasco Sauce
 Ear of a Bull

Shake with cracked ice, garnish with the bull's ear. Drink on safari during sexual intercourse in the back of a jeep, preferably in the middle of a small civil war.

Sartre Sling

Juice of 1 lemon
 1 tsp. powdered sugar
 2 oz. Gin
 1 tbsp. Cherry Flavored Brandy
 Carbonated Water
 1 oz. Vomit

Mix sugar, lemon juice and Gin in a collins glass. Add carbonated water, stir. Float Brandy and Vomit on top. Observe its vague, cold luminosity. Let the exquisite perfume fill your senses. Decide that all is tainted, all are alone. Despair.



The Case Of The Hand In

A firsthand account of two newsmen's
Jefferson County. The true story.

By Mark C. Winne

Here it is, my swan song, my last issue as editor of The Circle. It's been two years, half my college career, since I settled into the rocking desk chair, with the worn out spring and faded varnish, that sits in front of the biggest desk in our office. Two years of bickering with the student government, of sleepless weekends to meet deadlines, of awards and excitement when each issue rolls off the press.

The Circle afforded me satisfaction in itself, and too it opened a few doors for me. One of those was a job at the Birmingham News on Saturdays. And that led to this:

It was about 8 o'clock, the morning of Saturday, May 5. The first edition of the Saturday paper had just come off the press, and I was proofreading it. There had already been several obituaries to do that gray, foggy, routine morning.

At the city desk, the police radio scanner squawks constantly, and I rarely

pay attention to it. Sometimes I just turn down the volume. But this day I paid attention to the police radio for once, and it may have saved a man's life.

That is one of the few starry-bright points in a dark story involving alleged kidnap, robbery and murder plotting, a high-speed chase through the most populated area of the state, and the seamy world of Birmingham's Skid Row.

The feminine voice on the police radio broadcast a bulletin, shortly after 8 a.m., saying a human hand had been reported sticking out of the trunk of a brown car on a highway.

"Garland, did you hear that?" I said to Garland Reeves, the Saturday city editor.

He told me to call the police radio room and check it out. The sleepiness that goes with the 4 a.m. shift fading fast, I'd already picked up the phone.

The woman in the radio room put me on hold while she tried to find out what I was talking about. She returned to the phone to tell me about the reported hand sighting.

I told Reeves.

"It sounds like it's worth checking out," he said matter-of-factly while he scratched his beard.

Jerry Ayres, a News photographer, was going downstairs to get a cup of coffee when I met him on my way up to the photo department. I told him what was happening, and rather melodramatically too, though I had no idea the story would pan out. These kind don't often; about one in a 100,000 is a reasonable guess.

The weekend before, Ayres and I had gone on four stories together. The biggest was a bubble-gum blowing contest at a local shopping mall.

We had heard on the police box that the car was headed for Fairfield on I-59, westbound. Reeves called the photocar on the two-way radio to give us a police description of the auto we were looking for. A brown Plymouth, he said, and he gave us a license number.

There are lots of brown Plymouths on six lanes of interstate highway at any given time—I know now.

We were almost to Fairfield when Reeves called to correct the license number. He said if we didn't have anything by the time we got to the temporary end of the interstate to turn around and head home.

When we pulled off the interstate in Fairfield we still had nothing, but we saw

The Trunk

life-or-death, high-speed chase across



photos by Jerry Ayres, The Birmingham News

a Jefferson County Sheriff's deputy sitting on the shoulder. His radar gun wasn't out, so we figured he could be waiting for our man—or men, or woman. We stopped and asked him what he'd heard.

"They're probably long gone by now," he said. "I just heard the call and pulled over for a little while." Just in case, he said, as he explained that the citizen's band call probably had come so long before (it had placed the suspects in Ensley) that they could be anywhere in three counties by now.

Reeves had told us to turn around at the end of the interstate, but we didn't, on the kind of hunch that reporters imagine every now and then. Headed west toward Tuscaloosa, I spied an old beige Dodge or Plymouth going the other way. I told Jerry and we made a quick U-turn.

We finally passed the car back on the interstate near Midfield. The driver was a grimy enough character alright, but the tag didn't jive, and there sure wasn't a hand sticking out of the trunk.

Ayres all of a sudden remembered seeing a gimmick in a joke store—a rubber hand to attach to a car trunk, to create the illusion of a panicked hand waving from inside the car. Some joke.

We laughed, thinking we'd solved the mystery that had the sheriff's department and the police—yes, and us—baffled.

We headed for Birmingham, still looking but not at all optimistic. I

radioed the city desk and told them about Ayres' rubber hand and said there must be nothing to it.

There had been a story that morning I wanted to check out in person, a deceptive advertising story. Reeves didn't think it was worth the time to go out on it and I argued with him.

I told Ayres about it and he agreed to drive by the story location without letting Reeves know.

The story wasn't worth the effort. Reeves had been right and we didn't even have to get out of the car to find out. But if we hadn't gone on that junket—we still were in the car—we probably wouldn't have thought it worthwhile to head back out on the interstate when Reeves radioed, saying the brown car with the hand waving out of the back had been seen again.

It was Bessemer this time.

"Bessemer?!" fumed the nearly always easy-going Ayres as he wheeled the car toward the highway. "We'll never catch up to them." Bessemer was about 15 or 20 minutes away.

Let's try, I thought, the noble thought of rescuing a kidnap victim prodding me as much as my ignoble disdain for writing obituaries. That's what I'd likely be doing back at the office on a quiet day like today.

We drove down the highway and I looked half-heartedly for the car. And I looked. And I looked.

It was near Ensley when I spotted a beige Dodge or Plymouth. It looked just

like the one we'd seen before, so much so I nearly didn't crane to see the car as it passed us going the other direction.

But I did crane, and I did catch a glimpse of that hand. Just a patch of pink.

We were in the outside lane on our side of the highway, and they were in the middle lane on their side. Five lanes between us, each car travelling about 60 miles an hour, me without my glasses, and we saw those few knuckles worth of human hand.

"I saw it, Jerry," I blurted. He seemed nonplussed and veered toward the exit lane at Avenue I.

When we ran the redlight at the bottom of the ramp and he began yelling for the woman stopped at the next light to get out of the way, I found Jerry Ayres knew news when he saw it.

We were hopeful now, but still unconvinced we had found the real thing. I envisaged a cutesie page 2 feature story, maybe five or six inches long, about how a rubber hand gimmick had so occupied the cops and two employees of a major daily newspaper.

We'd lost ground at the spotlight, and Ayres was doing about 80 miles an hour to catch up. We passed a couple of exits and I worried that they could have turned off there. Just short of the Arkadelphia exit, we saw them.

Ayres, photographer turned wheelman, weaved to catch up. After a close brush with an 18-wheeler, the beige car was once more in sight. We bore down.

The hand looked for a minute as though it were the rubber toy, after all, flapping in the wind. Closer inspection soon proved it was human flesh, strumming up and down as if to the beat of the country music Ayres had tuned in on our car radio.

We thought at first it was a female hand, but closer inspection showed it to be a man's, filthy and greasy under the nails. We followed.

I radioed Garland Reeves that we had found them. Yes, I said, I was sure. Reeves asked if it looked like the police should be called.

"Yeah, Garland," I said. "We're just short of the 17th Street exit," I added as we came to the I-59 and I-65 interchange and Birmingham came into view.

Seconds later Reeves came back, "Do you see the police yet?"

I glanced over each shoulder and settled back in the seat. "Nope.

"We're coming up on the 25th Street exit," I radioed soon after.



Still no police. "Stay with them," said Reeves. We did, like Starsky and Hutch. Hutch would have been proud of us.

Bobbing in and out of traffic to stay behind the car, a Dodge, about a 1964 model, I grabbed the wheel and steered while Ayres hung out the window and leaned over the wheel to take pictures—some of the best spot-news pictures Alabama will ever see. The feat was Ayres taking the pictures and at the same time synchronizing the accelerator with my mad swerves with the wheel as we maneuvered for the best photo angle. This on an 8-lane interstate, in a chase that took us across three cities.

"We're nearly at the airport exit and I don't see any cops," I radioed Reeves.

"Just stick with them," came with the reply in crackly radio voice.

"They're getting off at the airport exit," I yelled into the microphone moments later.

That's when they must have caught on that we were following them. They turned onto a side street near the Airport Ramada Inn and, while we were stopped by traffic, the burst of oil-heavy exhaust told us the car were running from us as fast as it could.

Ayres and I knew it and rushed to keep up with them as they turned into a residential area.

When we turned, we couldn't see the car. Somehow we glimpsed them at the end of an alley when we passed by perpendicularly. Ayres screeched onto a parallel street and we tried to find them in the small, rapidly moving spaces between houses.

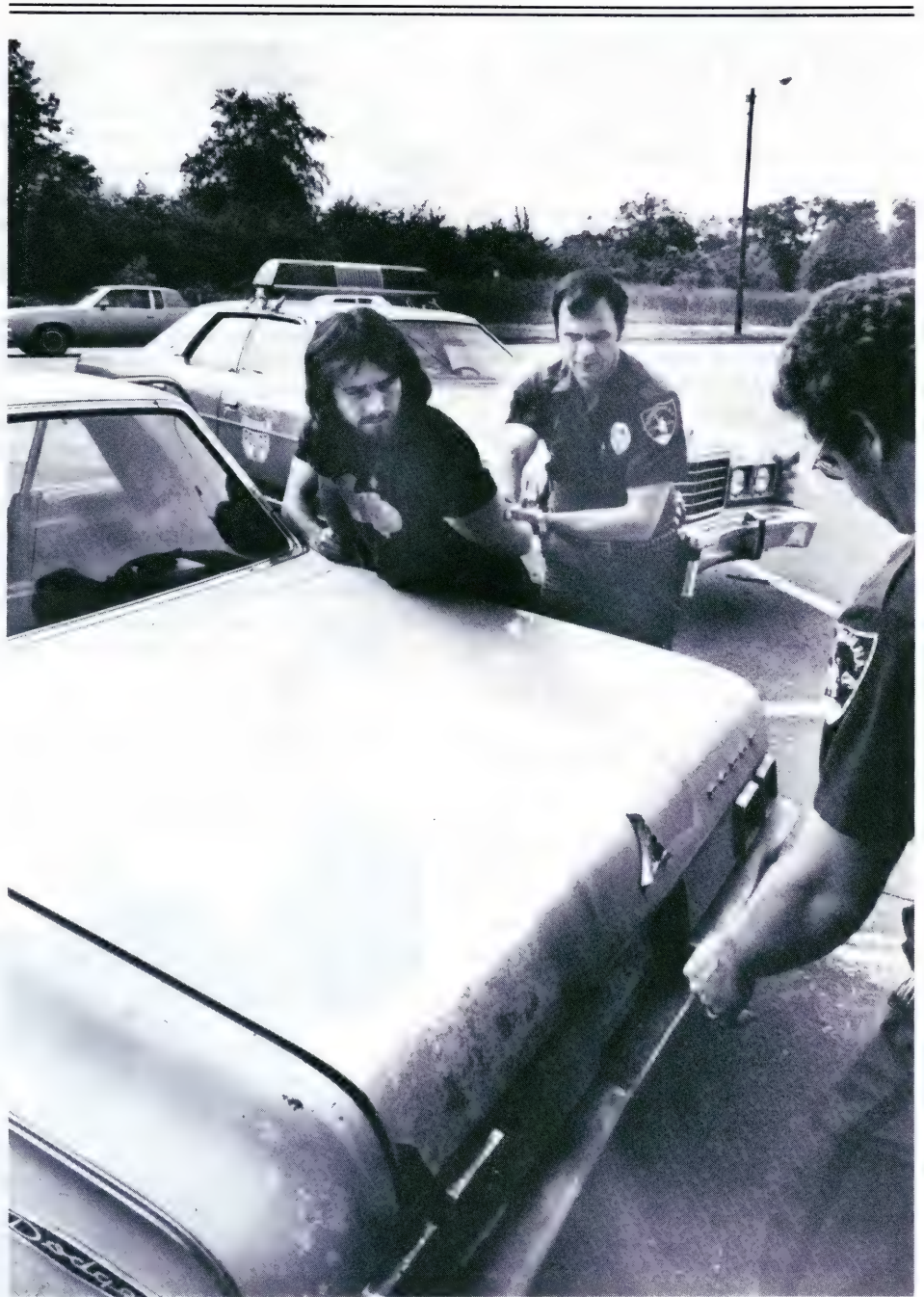
When we came to the alley's end, we found them all right. We were blocking a potential escape route, albeit unwittingly. The girl at the wheel—for the first time I saw her from the front—seemed to be staring me dead in the eyes.

A defiant, bitter stare, but a short-lived one since they turned down a road and headed for the place where they had entered the projects.

We gave chase, trying in vain to radio our location to Reeves. He'd later recall the difficulty he had in getting our position to the police.

"It seemed that just as I got one location down," he said, "Mark was shouting another one at me. I'd tell the dispatcher one thing and then I'd have to say 'no, no, wait a minute.'"

While Reeves stood at the city desk with the phone in one hand, to the police, and the radio mike in the other to



us, Ayres and I saw a Birmingham police car, driven by Officer J.B. McElroy, skid into a U-turn, blue and red lights flashing furiously.

The beige Dodge was stuck at a traffic light and the blue and white squad car pulled in behind it. McElroy's hand rested on his holstered gun while he moved quickly toward the car.

Ayres and I pulled in behind his car. Reeves told me later that when I radioed him that the car had stopped he replied, "Stay in the car and watch."

We got out and ran up there. As McElroy hustled the female driver into

the patrol car, the first of three other police cars arrived.

A plainclothesman tried to lift the trunk, fingers still protruding from a space where the black rubber lining was missing, but to no avail. He got the car keys from the ignition, but there was no trunk key.

"Get me a screwdriver," he barked.

Meanwhile, officers yanked a bearded, apparently intoxicated man, later identified as Joseph Fendley, 27, of Morris, from a back seat area stewn with empty liquor bottles.

The detective banged on the end of

the screwdriver with the butt of his hand as he tried to jimmy the trunk lock.

Police pulled Wilburn Fendley, Joseph Fendley's uncle, from the front seat. The white-haired, haggard man, looking far older than his 49 years, was disoriented.

While the three suspects sat in the back seat of a patrol car, the trunk came open.

Gary O. Collier was covered in the grime that accumulates in old car trunk compartments. It mixed with the blood caked around a gash on his elbow. He winced with nearly every movement.

"She's got my whole damn check," he said, referring to the female driver, Robin Green, alias Robin Lowery, of the Birmingham area.

He said the cash stolen from him, money from a recent disability check, amounted to about \$350, though one officer said the suspects had no money on them at the time.

Collier, 35, said he had been in the trunk since 9 p.m. Friday.

It was nearly 11 a.m. Saturday when police opened it.

"I'm lucky to be alive," he said, adding at least part of the trio had robbed him, beaten him and stabbed him in the abdomen and elbow with a screwdriver and locked him in the car.

He said he heard them plotting his murder. "They were talking about how to 'get rid of me,'" he said.

I furiously scribbled my notes and tried to overcome the rapid pulse to get every detail I could. Ayres continued to take pictures. Collier disappeared to a nearby service station to go to the bathroom.

"I would too," laughed a policeman.

Collier came back, thanked Ayres and me, and got in a squad car to go to Cooper Green Hospital, where he got X-rays and stitches.

The next several hours were spent at precinct houses, city hall, a local hospital and the city jail, getting information on suspects and victim.

I rode from the hospital to the city hall police station with Collier.

From what he told me then and what police say he told them, here is Collier's account of the incident:

Collier met the three suspects at a Bessemer bar the night before. He said he had never seen them before, but he thought they "just wanted to go drinkin'."

The girl and the younger Fendley began drinking whiskey and taking drugs (pills and a substance tentatively

identified as pot were found in the car) and Collier decided he wanted to leave them. It was about 9 p.m. Friday night, about four hours after he met them.

The girl demanded his money, and he gave it to them because he felt threatened. The young Fendley, he said, beat him. It wasn't clear who, but someone stabbed him twice with a screwdriver. He was forced in the trunk, where he would remain for 14 hours.

Collier said he had been robbed of about \$350 from a recently cashed disability check before they stuffed him into the trunk, from which he could hear two of the trio discussing, "how to get rid of me."

The car apparently was driven most of the night, except for brief stops. During one of those, Collier says, he heard what seemed to be the younger Fendley trying to convince the girl to finish him.

"They got out last night and stood around—I think he was trying to make her do it."

Collier said he had been fading in and out of consciousness from carbon monox-

ide in the old car when his rescuers arrived. His fresh air, and the space where he could squeeze his fingers out into the open had apparently come from a gap between the trunk lid and car frame where the black rubber lining had rotted away.

"I'd done made my peace," Collier said solemnly afterward, "or was trying to."

Back at the News, I had about two and a half hours before deadline to fill most of the front page and two full inside pages with my stories and Ayres' pictures.

The editor, managing editor and city editor all came in. The managing editor, Clarke Stallworth, proofread for me, fed my carbons to the Associated Press and began lining up TV appearances.

The AP version went international, and a United Press International version went national. Grizzled veterans told me they had never seen a story like it, that it was a once-in-a-lifetime thing. It better not be.





Conrad Aiken

At eleven a fire brushes his lips,
With flames from an angry finger's twitch.
The warm pistol swirls in their hot blood.
This scene violates the young boy's soul,
As the rapist's thrusts did Philomel.
Yet his tongue is saved for song.

Police tap at the window.
Stretchers scratch the garden stones.
The owl mourns in a cypress tree,
Echoing two sharp tones.

In him the tones resounded long,
So burnt he was, yet saved for song.

—Mark Willis

[As a boy Aiken, who would later become Eliot's friend and a poet himself, heard two gunshots and discovered that his father, raging in a quarrel, had killed his wife and then himself. In spite of this disharmonious incident, Aiken's poetry is marked, as one critic writes, by "musical, liquid speech," by "extraordinary and subtle harmonies."]

natasha disappeared

Lost in the sound of well muscled arms;

went over to the other side
to join those already rebuilding
the long slender thighs

yet not bothering to replace
the tongues long since cut away
by the blinking of lidless eyes.

Others
pace from debris and chuckle
from every crevice of their imagination.
still
no one believes me

sealed lips are but words
in parenthesis,
a part of the numbness
that echoes in new corners.

my soul is a veil
for an all too thin smile:

(i feel like i killed one
who might have destroyed me)

natasha disappeared

Lost in the sound of well muscled arms;

now
alone i sleep in my clothes
waiting for the call

immersed in the light
of a projector
and the sound of film
spinning

on the end of a reel.

—D.M. Petrizzi

lithograph by Tara Adams



Jude

By Amy Dawes

The only people for me are the mad ones, the ones who are mad to live, mad to talk, mad to be saved, desirous of everything at the same time, the ones who never yawn or say a commonplace thing, but burn, burn, burn...

—Jack Kerouac

Olivia, the night cook, waved her sweat-streaked arms and shouted to Faye as she set up tables. "And this young fella, been lookin' at me, comes right up to the galley, actin' like he know me, he said, I know how to make you smile, I'm gonna marry you and take you right out o' here, I said, bull-shit, but he jus' kept on, and this was a white dude, too."

"Oh, wasn't one of them furriners, hun?" Faye asked conversationally as she wiped down a row of high-chairs.

"No, not one of them, this one didn' have no money. Them furriners the only one's got any money. I knew one, he name Mohammed, he tol' me he know a man back in that country got seven children, an' so he got to have eight houses. An' when his daughter get married, she don' have to buy no house, she already got one. Father gives it to her. And when the son get married, they fix him up same way. But this one tol' me he can't go back there no more, or they kill him, they kill him cause he left..."

"Well, I guess the U.S.A.'s the best," said Faye with blue-eyed optimism.

"I don't know about that."

"No?"

"No, I don' know 'bout that, 'cause see, in them commanist countries, they got all kinda rules, they tell you can't do this, can't do that, they tell you, see, what you can't do, and here, they jus' get sneaky about it. 'Cause how can you have free speech, and free press, when they can arrest you for cussin' in the street, and for arguin' too loud, and for tryin' to talk to the President, they can damn sure arrest you for that."

"Oh yeah, they'll throw you in there for life for that one."

"Yeah, can't believe nothin' the gubment say. All I know is you keep yo' mouf shut, you go to church, and you stay out o' trouble, that's all I know. But this fool say he gonna marry me, he be comin' back, because they left they backpacks in the back—here come Harriet, late again, wif all her big ideas, can't even read time..."

Harriet greeted them and brushed past, warm rain dripping from her long hair. She slung her philosophy book onto a countertop and headed for the timeclock in the kitchen. "Better put that hair up fo' Carl see you!" called Olivia.

"Carl's not here!" Harriet called back, pushing past the swinging door. The timeclock read ten after ten. She slapped

its smug glass face contemptuously before punching in. Din, the dishwasher, laughed from his napping post against the egg crates. Harriet was startled. "I didn't even see you there!" she said. "Are you sleeping again?"

Din smiled with brown-eyed self-indulgence from under a thatch of dark hair. He had a scar that covered half his face and made many people afraid of him, and an Iranian accent that few could interpret. "I am dreaming," he said. "I dream that I am not here, that I do not know this job, that I am back in my country running through the streets with the rest, shouting, burning—"

"Getting shot—" supplied Harriet.

Din shrugged. "Doesn't matter. Anything is better than this." He glared at the four walls around him. "You know what I want to do every day? Do you know what I will do soon? This—" He jerked off his cap and apron, crumpled them into a ball in his fists, and raced down the kitchen to the manager's office. "Carl!" He pounded on the door. "Carl, you scum-bastard, here, I give you this! Here! Eat!" He collapsed with laughter against the door frame. He ran back to Harriet, eyes dancing. "You should do, too. Here, like this—" He snatched off her apron and crumpled it, shaking it above her head.

She laughed and grabbed at it. "Here, give me that, stop it—you're crazy—"

"Crazy, crazy," sang Din, then stopped and looked at her. "We are both crazy," he said. "Crazy to be here, crazy to work for Carl, crazy to live with this government—"

"Now don't start in on Communism," Harriet warned.

"Why not? When will you see? What is this?" he slapped a wet rag against the greasy wall. "Is this good? Who is getting rich from me? Carl! I work like dog for him, I get nothing!"

"But you could be like—" She stopped.

"You see?" he said. "I don't want to be like Carl. Nobody should be like him. Is very bad."

Faye pushed open the door. "Harriet, you got you a table," she said. She lit a cigarette and seated herself on a blue backpack that was leaning against the wall. "Lord, I'm tired," she said.

As soon as Harriet saw the Bible lying open on the table between them, she knew that she had seen them before. She approached warily.

"You ready to order?" she asked, pencil poised. They didn't notice her. One was reading to the other, and their eyes shone back and forth. Harriet sighed. "You ready to order?" she repeated.

"Oh, excuse us,—" The reader looked up at her. "We know you! We asked you for a ride last night at the intersection."

"Yeah, I remember you," she said.

"And you wouldn't give us one."

"Not after you asked if you could spend the night, too."

"Well, it's awfully hard when you come into a strange town and no one will give you a place to stay."

"You can stay here all night as far as I'm concerned. I work 'til five in the morning."

"Just maybe we will. The weather's terrible. Looks like maybe we're stranded here."

Third Place

Sigma Tau Delta Fiction Contest

painting by Rick Burton

"Yeah, I've been stranded here for a couple of years. Don't worry, the time goes fast."

"What's your name?"

"Are you ready to order?"

"C'mon, what's your name?"

"Harriet."

"Mine's Jude. Like the song. Hey Jude..."

"Don't be afraid..." sang the other one.

"This is Ishmael, my brother."

"I thought the song was—don't be a fool," said Harriet.

"Maybe it is, But I am a fool. A fool for a lady like you."

She gave him a sarcastic smile.

"Isn't she pretty, Ishmael? And she's got nice tits."

"Wait a minute!" she snapped. "I thought you were—"

"What, this Bible? What's the matter? I can talk about tits. God made tits."

"You're not funny." She walked off.

"Wait a minute, come back. You haven't taken our order yet."

"What do you want?"

"Just coffee, please."

She sighed and went off to get it.

"We've already eaten dinner here, you know," Jude said as she poured the coffee. "We left our backpacks in your kitchen. We were going to camp somewhere, but it's raining too hard. There's a tornado warning, you know."

Harriet looked alarmed. "No, I didn't know, I thought it was just a watch."

"Well, it's a warning now. I'm surprised this place is still open."

Harriet headed for the manager's office. Olivia was just hanging up the phone. "Were you talking to Carl?" Harriet demanded.

"Yeah, an' he say can't close the store, say ain't no reason."

"But the weather—" said Harriet. "Some Jesus freak out there told me there's a tornado warning. We oughta close."

"Carl say ain't no tornado, just rain." Olivia insisted. Harriet reached for the phone. "He say he don' want to talk to you, neither," said Olivia smugly.

"Of course he doesn't, said Harriet. "He knows what I'll say." But she went back out into the restaurant. Faye was seated in the back booth, staring out at the rain.

"Lord, I'm tired," she complained. "Nothing to do. If Carl had any sense, he'd close us."

"Not us," said Harriet, propping herself against the wall. "Not while he can keep the cash register ringing. We could be hit by a tornado and he's tell us to stand here and hold everything down." They stared out at the dark night and the bright headlights ricocheting across the window panes in the mirror drops of rain.

An hour crawled by, and then another, and business dwindled down until Jude and Ishmael were the only table remaining. Harriet read an essay in her textbook, and then stared out the window and thought about it. Olivia and Faye sat in the back booth, smoking and talking about the laziness of the crew on second shift. Harriet looked up and saw Jude signalling for more coffee. She ignored him. Suddenly the door blew open and a familiar figure walked in. He wore a tightly belted trenchcoat, a pair of children's plastic sunglasses, and a soggy felt hat glittering with a thousand safety pins. There were dog chains and lengths of copper wire wrapped around his wrists. Harriet was surprised. She had

never seen the poor creature out this late at night before. She reached for a coffeepot, but he waved it excitedly away, spraying drops of water around the room. "Have you seen it?" he demanded, face flushed.

"What?" asked Harriet, alarmed.

"I really wanted to tell you, I just saw it." He ran back out of the restaurant and out into the storm. Harriet stared after him, dazed. Jude walked up to her with his coffeepot in his hand. "Who was that?"

"Oh," said Harriet slowly. "Just somebody who can't seem to make any sense out of the world." Her eyes were far away. She reached automatically for the coffeepot and went to fill it. Jude walked slowly back to his table. Harriet turned to watch him. "Hey look," she called. "If you're so hot on saving souls, why don't you run after him and tell him God loves him, or something. He could probably use it." She walked over and poured the steaming coffee.

Jude's eyes were troubled as he watched her. "You think I'm a phony, don't you? Or do I threaten you? I want to know."

Harriet set the coffee pot down and looked at him steadily.

"Okay," she said. "I've just seen too many people like you come in here. And it's always the same story and you're all worked up about it, handing out propaganda, reading from the Bible—and I don't even think you believe yourselves. Or else why do you always have to be begging everybody else to believe you?" Din was bussing the table behind them, listening intently.

"Because it's the truth!" Jude exclaimed. "You've got to believe it!"

"Hah! See what I mean? I've got a few ideas of my own, and I don't feel the need to go around telling everybody they're God's truth."

Well, then maybe you don't believe in them."

They glared at each other. "You don't know that," she said.

"Oh yeah? Are you happy doing this?" He indicated the restaurant with a wave of his arm.

"No, of course not. But it doesn't matter. I'm going to school, and—"

"No, wait. How long have you worked here?"

"A couple of years..."

"And how much longer?"

Harriet looked vague. "I don't know. Years, I guess..."

"And do you hate it?"

She smiled. "Yes, I hate it."

"Then why do you do it?"

"For the money, of course."

"Exactly! The money, the money. Money is evil! It reduces us all to—to buying and selling each other, to doing everything for gain, nothing for free, nothing for love! But look at me, I don't need any money. My brother and I go around spreading the word of God, and everywhere we go, God provides for us! He provides food, shelter, warmth, friends—he provided this roof over our heads tonight! What more do we need? Money is empty, meaningless, dirty—"

"Easy for you to say," interjected Din, "to explain why you are lazy bum."

Jude twisted around in his seat. "Oh, c'mon! You're trapped here in this place and you don't even know why! I come to tell you about God and everybody runs away from me and they don't even know why—"

Din threw down his bus tray and let it crash against the

floor. "I tell you why!" he shouted. "You want to know what is God in this country? Not Jesus Christ, not Carter, not you, not me—this!" He yanked a wad of bills from his back pocket and flung them into the air. They scattered and floated down onto the table. "Money," Din said bitterly.

Jude saw the green bills staring back at him from the tabletop. He got up abruptly and walked around the room. "Maybe for you," he said slowly, gazing around. "Maybe money is your god. But I don't believe in it. And I don't believe in any of the bullshit you people go through in life. I don't need it any more. I've left it all behind. I know God, and only God...is...pure..." His eyes locked with Harriet's and for one second both pairs blazed with ideas. Then she turned hers away.

"How do I know that you know?" she said softly.

"Just what do you want me to do?"

The lights flickered in the restaurant. "Look!" Jude pointed out the window, spellbound. Harriet saw the funnel just across the overpass, like an enormous black devil dancing against the indigo sky. It spat a bright red car up from the ground and spun it through the air. "Oh my God," she whispered.

Din ran through the kitchen and yanked open the heavy steel door of the freezer. "In here!" he called. The pressure

dropped in the restaurant and the lightbulbs exploded, dropping them into darkness. They stumbled to the back and crowed into the freezer. Harriet was pushed against Ishmael. "Where's Jude?" she demanded, her voice suddenly panicky.

A sudden calm broke the roar of the wind. Harriet broke free and ran to the kitchen door. Jude stood alone in the middle of the floor, head back and arms outstretched, spinning in dreamy circles. Harriet was paralyzed. "Jude!" she called out.

He opened his eyes. The windows burst into a million pieces and Harriet was slammed against the door frame. She wrapped herself around it and held on tight. A sheet of glass sucked like a death carpet across the room and exploded against the opposite wall. Wind and water filled the room and roared like a great train in a tunnel. Harriet could feel it sucking her out and she dug her fingernails into the flaking blue paint of the doorframe and prayed.

When the crashing and breaking had stopped and the wind had relaxed its hold on her and skipped away, Harriet picked herself up and walked out into the restaurant. Jude was gone. Rain fell down onto the rubble all around her. She looked up and through the hole in the roof she saw a new star shining in the sky.

Guera

I

Startled by the sudden shock
Of infamous yellow hair;
Bound with treacherous skill by the lock
Which snaps with such blonde nonchalance,
The dark boys in black eyes stare
And sing for Guera in the streets.

II

They worshipped the splendid god of plumes and steel,
Who came because the prophets said he must.
Flowers and gold, and more flowers than gold
Welcomed tall and fair Cortez Quetzalcoat!
To the city of the eagle and the snake.

Not sacrifice but murder is the people's terror,
Their heart torn now by glaring battle.
The gods of intricate temples fall and break,
Shattering into voids that once were souls,
Voids to be filled by the blond pretender's will.

III

She smiles at the purity of their lust.
She accepts their idolatry with confidence.
As through the night boys still call Guera,
Till she shrouds them in her conquering sheets.

—Steve Windham

Third Place

Sigma Tau Delta Poetry Contest



The Stocking Strangler

A year has passed since he claimed his last victim, but Columbus has not forgotten. Columbus will never forget.

By John Mangels

Wynnton has been described as an affluent neighborhood. Well-manicured lawns, unbroken by sidewalks, slope to the street. Dense shubbery and flowering trees surround large brick homes. Late-model Cadillacs and an occasional Mercedes dot driveways in the area. The quiet is noticeable, even eerie, interrupted only by the muted hum of air conditioners.

It has been over a year since a strangler who killed seven elderly women terrorized this Columbus, Ga., suburb, but the fear still felt by residents is apparent in their reluctance to discuss the killings.

Summoned to the door by the barking of her dog, Faye Tanner (not her real name), an elderly widow who, like the Stocking Strangler's victims, lives alone, agreed to speak about the slayings. Mrs. Tanner lives several houses away from the home of Jeane Dimenstein, 71, the strangler's second victim.

"The stranglings made me feel as if the whole neighborhood had been violated, like a trust had been betrayed," Mrs. Tanner said. "I've lived here over twenty years, and after the killings began, I thought about moving like some of my friends did. But I refuse to be run out of my home."

Standing on her front stoop, the stocky, fashionably dressed widow said she did not feel people had become complacent since the killings abruptly stopped on April 20, 1978. "I think this whole thing has made people appreciate the fact that they need to be more aware of their personal safety."

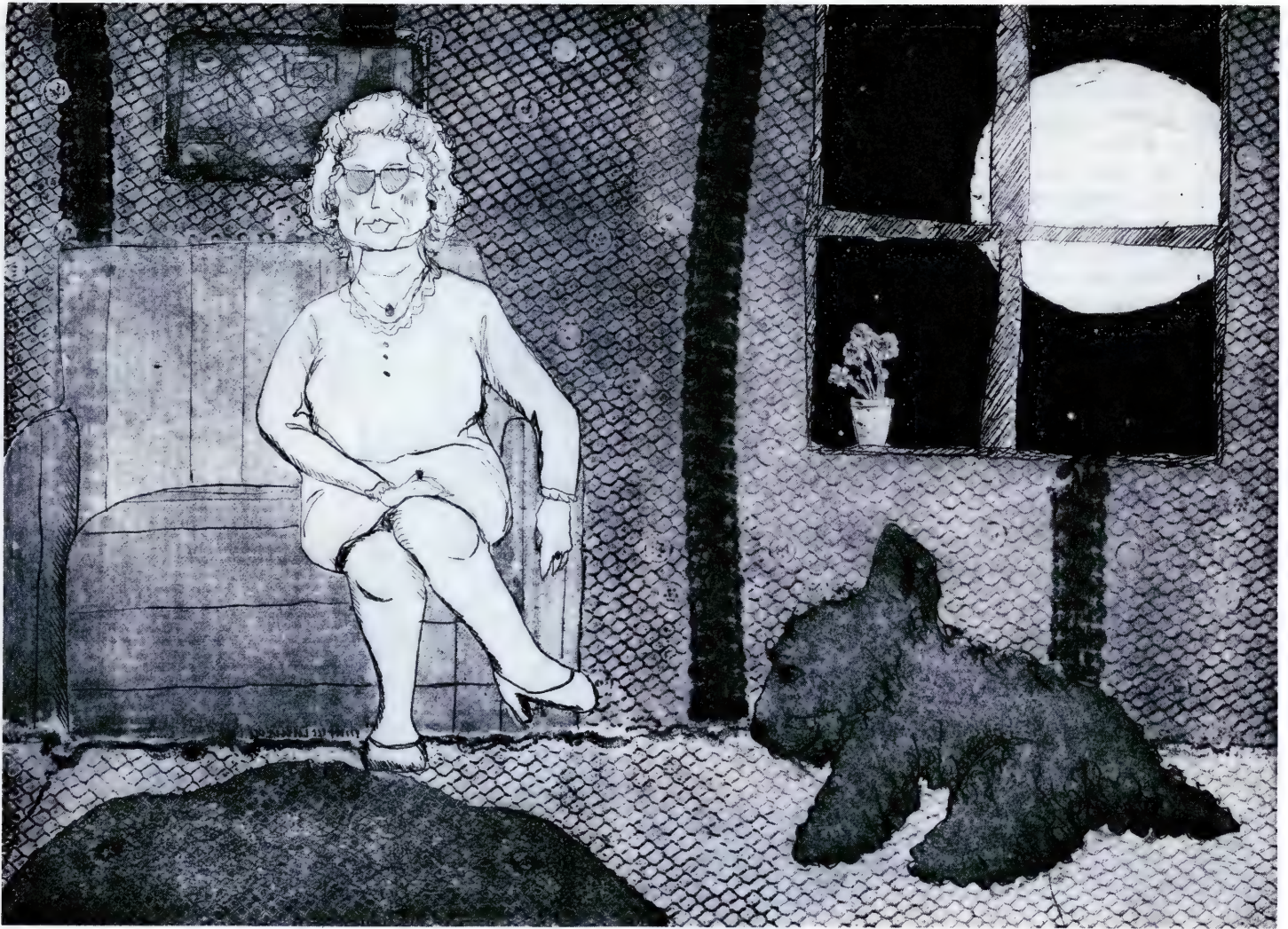
"My house has a burglar alarm and I've got my dog who sleeps with me at night. I own a gun and wouldn't hesitate one minute to use it on someone who gets inside. I hope we've heard the last of the strangler, but I wouldn't be surprised if the killings started again."

Columbus police officials agree, saying it is entirely possible the killer will strike again. "According to psychiatric profiles, sex criminals of this type generally continue until they are caught," said David Hopkins, Columbus police information officer and Auburn University graduate. "The Stocking Strangler could be dead, out of the state or in jail on another charge, but we've got to assume he's still alive."

So the special police task force formed to investigate the slayings continues to operate. The investigation has been the most time-consuming and expensive in Columbus history, costing almost \$1.5 million to date. More than 60 local and state police officers gathered evidence and patrolled the Wynnton area at the height of the investigation. Both the Georgia Bureau of Investigation and the FBI were called on to assist Columbus police. A special computer filing system was developed to handle the 16,500 interviews conducted in connection with the case.

Fourteen men remain on the special task force. The GBI is no longer actively involved but remains on standby. "Some good information still comes in," said Hopkins, "but to be honest, we're not a whole lot closer now to catching the strangler than we were after the first killing."

"I wouldn't say we're frustrated with the progress of the investigation, just disappointed," said Herman W. Boone,



commander of the Bureau of Investigative Services of the Columbus Police Department. "I don't think anyone on the force has relaxed or become complacent about the case."

Hopkins said most of the criticism for the department's failure to capture the strangler has come from the press rather than the general public. "Most people don't realize that crimes aren't solved in 58 minutes, like on television. It's a tedious job that doesn't always get results."

Hopkins said the Stocking Strangler task force was ranked as good as or better than the task forces formed to investigate the Son of Sam and Hillside Strangler murders, according to police officials involved in those cases.

The killings began when the body of Ferne Jackson, 60, a health department officer, was found strangled with a stocking on Sept. 16, 1977. Jeane Dimenstein, 71, a retired clothing store owner, was found Sept. 25, 1977. Florence Scheible, 89, a deaf, partially blind widow who could only move with the aid of a walker, was found Oct. 21, 1977. Mrs. Scheible was the only victim to be strangled during daylight. Martha Thurmond, a retired schoolteacher who was to celebrate her seventieth birthday the night she was killed, was found Oct. 25, 1977. Kathleen Woodruff, 78, a wealthy socialite, was found strangled with her own scarf Dec. 28, 1977. Mildred Borom, 78, was found strangled with a venetian blind cord Feb. 11, 1978. Janet Cofer, 61, a first-grade teacher and the strangler's last known victim, was

found April 20, 1978.

The only victim to escape the strangler was Ruth Schwob, 74. Mrs. Schwob, who said she keeps active and likes to jog, awoke to find a masked and gloved man on top of her wrapping pantyhose around her throat. She fought him off and was able to set off a burglar alarm, which summoned police, only hours before Mrs. Borom was killed.

Some similarities have become evident in the crimes. All of the victims were elderly widows who lived alone, except for Jeane Dimenstein, who was unmarried. All of the victims were sexually molested. All wore eyeglasses and were listed in the city directory as widows. Six of the slayings occurred within a one-mile area near Wynnton Road. Janet Cofer lived two miles away, but attended church in the Wynnton suburb.

Until the Borom killing, police officials would not state publicly that they believed all the killings were done by the same man. Both Boone and Hopkins refused to discuss physical evidence in the crimes, but Hopkins said that evidence does exist which links the same strangler to at least two of the slayings. "We have some fingerprints we can't identify, but I wouldn't say that's an uncommon situation," Hopkins said. "Footprints found outside the Schwob, Cofer and Borom homes are similar, but we can't say they are definitely the same."

All of the victim's houses were forcibly entered except Mrs. Scheible's, according to Boone. Police theorize she was in her

yard when the strangler slipped in through an unlocked door. "At Mrs. Thurmond's home, the dead-bolt lock was installed backward and the strangler simply removed the screws," said Hopkins. "At the Dimenstein house, the door hinges were installed on the outside, and he removed the pins and took off the whole door."

Lock and gun sales increased dramatically during the killings, but a hardware clerk at J.C. Penney store from the Wynnton neighborhood said many elderly ladies would not buy locks. "They would come in and gaze at the locks. You could tell they were worried about their safety, but they had no one to install the hardware, and they couldn't do it by themselves." Another Penney's clerk said attic and window ventilation fans increased in sales. "People wanted to be able to hear sounds that an air conditioner might cover up," she said.

The 20 month investigation had produced few clues to the killer's identity. It is known that the killer has O-positive blood and pubic hair with negroid characteristics, but his race has not been narrowed. Both Boone and Hopkins refused to say whether the blood typing was obtained from sperm or blood samples. Newspaper accounts at the time of the Cofer killing reported a source as saying blood stains were found on bed covering in the home.

Psychological profiles of the strangler requested by the Columbus Police Department indicate the killer is probably 18 to 24 years old. "The experts say that generally, the older the victim, the younger the killer," Hopkins said.



etching by Susan Waldrip



Psychologists also theorize that the strangler had a dominant elderly figure in his life, possibly a mother or grandmother.

Both Boone and Hopkins said the strangler was smart, and that it was probable that he scouted or staked out the homes of his victims. Columbus Police Chief Curtis McClugg described the strangler as "cunning and shrewd," and said, "It's obvious he's playing games with us," referring to the killing of Mrs. Borom while police investigated the Schwob assault several blocks away.

Hopkins said for a time investigators seriously considered the possibility that the strangler was a policeman or that he wore a police uniform, in an attempt to explain the ease in which the killer moved through the neighborhood and gained access to homes. That theory was later discounted, however.

Stranglings similar to those in Columbus have occurred in Wichita, Kan., Cincinnati, Ohio, and Amherst, N.Y., but no evidence has appeared to suggest a direct connection with the Stocking Strangler, according to Hopkins. A national law enforcement teletype wire keeps Columbus police informed about similar cases around the country, and police investigators have traveled as far as California to follow up leads.

The Columbus stranglings received extensive coverage in newspapers, magazines and network television. Reporters from the Associated Press, United Press International, Time, Newsweek, and major newspapers in the United States and Canada wrote stories about the killings. An account of the slayings was carried in a paper, in Paris, France.

Six days after the Cofer killing, San Francisco's Zodiac killer resurfaced after a four-year silence. In a letter to the San

etching by Frances Allen Jones

Francisco Chronicle, the killer said, "...You will get tired and leave me alone."

"I don't think that will happen in Columbus," Boone said. "In my opinion, people haven't let their guard down. They're pretty much aware the killings could reoccur. I know the police haven't relaxed, and they never will."

Hopkins agreed, saying perhaps some people had become complacent but the department had not. "Recently, the alarm went off at Mrs. Schwob's house," he said. "It was set off accidentally, but within three minutes it looked like a Fraternal Order of Police convention out there. This case is still the number one priority with the task force."

Hopkins said he does not feel the passing of a year has diminished the chances of catching the strangler. "We'll get the guy eventually," he said. The blond former television broadcaster sat in front of a flickering computer terminal, linked to almost a floor full of hardware in the Columbus City Government Building. The computer, known as CAJIST (Columbus Area Justice Information SysTem), contains almost every scrap of evidence police have in the stranglings.

"It's all in there," Hopkins said, tapping the terminal screen. "You know, the alleged Son of Sam killer was caught when a traffic ticket checked by the computer placed him in the area of the killings, and that's what we need. We'll find one little piece of evidence and everything will fall into place."

Boone, looking tired, propped his feet on his neat desk. His office is small, furnished with a bookcase containing law volumes, a city map of Columbus and a chart showing the levels of various crimes in the city. "I've been with the force for 27 years, and this is probably the most important case I've worked on," the greying detective said.

Will he put in his 30 and retire?

"I don't know," he said. "I'd like to stay here until we get the strangler."



Second Place, Sigma Tau Delta Poetry Contest

Saint Stephen

Witness the scene: withered grandfathers recite
Charges, send children for rocks, young and old
Unite against the young man withstanding
Hard urge to live, relent, submit to fright.
Why praised be curdling blood or bone blanching
Murder? When stone falls, heart reels, steels bold,
Gallops to blackest metaphysical night.

Saint Stephen's bent body explodes in the dust,
Runs red, now quivers, now shakes from the heat,
Trembles twice, again, comes home to hard ground.
Zealous spirit sheds heavy robe of clay,
Already slumbers and slips into sleep,
Now folds red eyes into rock-battered brow,
Squinting at mystery too bright for dark day.

—Joe Bird

etching by Beverly Baker

The Battle Of

Country music's old guard has squared off new breed. A report from the front lines.

By Echo Annette Montgomery

The author grew up on the inside of the country music scene. Her father is Bob Montgomery, who started in the music business with no less than Buddy Holly, a high school classmate. He turned to writing, and in the mid 60s penned "Misty Blue," a multi-million seller. Later he produced Bobby Goldsboro's smash "Honey," and his producing occupies much of his time now.

Since the early 70s, Montgomery has run House of Gold Publishing Co., one of the country's largest music publishers. Since Charlie Rich's "Behind Closed Doors" sent the company on its way, clients have included Loretta Lynn, Tanya Tucker, Player, Wild Cherry, Bobby Bare, Gladys Knight, Kenny Rogers, Dolly Parton, John Connally, Dr. Hook, Johnny Duncan, Eddy Arnold and Johnny Rodriguez.

A visitor to Nashville's Music Row would likely be disappointed with his first glimpse of the heart of Music City, U.S.A. Although an unusual number of Cadillacs line the street, few country music stars can be seen anywhere. And there really aren't even that many would-be stars pounding the pavement, the archetypal guitar strapped to their back. The only noticeable activity is at the end of the street at the Country Music Hall of Fame. Buses pull up and

let out hordes of tourists armed with cameras and autograph books. After a few hours of searching vainly up and down the street and in the museum for their favorite artist, they load up on the bus and head back to their hotels. For the most part, Music Row is quiet, just like any other business area.

But there is a war raging here, not the kind of war fought with guns and bullets, of course, but one fought with guitars and picks. On the one side there is the sequined country music set, or Traditionalists, led by hardcore types like Buck Owens, Porter Wagoner, Loretta Lynn, Jean Shephard, and George Jones. They reverence Roy Acuff as the King of Country Music and Kitty Wells as the Queen. Their music is characterized by the traditional wails and twangs of hillbilly music, simple lyrics, and a minimum of production. On the other side is the Progressive, or Country Pop set, rapidly increasing in number and popularity. Nashville's New Breed includes Kris Kristofferson, The Outlaws, Rita Coolidge, Crystal Gayle, Charlie Rich, and Ray Stevens, to name a few. Kenny Rogers and Dolly Parton are usually recognized as the royalty of the Progressive Country clan. This music is characterized by the same basic charm that permeates Traditional country, along with more sophisticated lyrics and production.

This new country movement actually began in the mid 50s with the advent of rock 'n' roll. Up until that point, country, or hillbilly music as it was sometimes called, had changed very little since its inception in the 1920s. But as rock 'n' roll gained in popularity, its influence touched Nashville, resulting in Country Pop. Sparked by such erstwhile country singers as Elvis Presley, Buddy Holly, Bill Haley, and Carl Perkins, several hard-core country artists made deliberate, calculated attempts to go "uptown." Traditionalists saw in Country Pop an intrusion into their jealously guarded territory. They resented artists who had crossover hits (those which make it in both the pop and country charts). Skeeter Davis, feeling this pressure as one of the first big Country Pop female artists, was compelled to reassure her country fans at one point, because she was receiving too much pop recognition: "...because of this record ('The End of the World') and some other records that followed getting on the pop charts as well as country, some folks thought I wasn't country anymore. But I've stayed in the Grand Ole Opry since joining in 1959 which proves that my heart's in country."

Throughout its early development, country music was looked down upon, condescendingly dubbed "hick" music. As a result of this snobbery, many

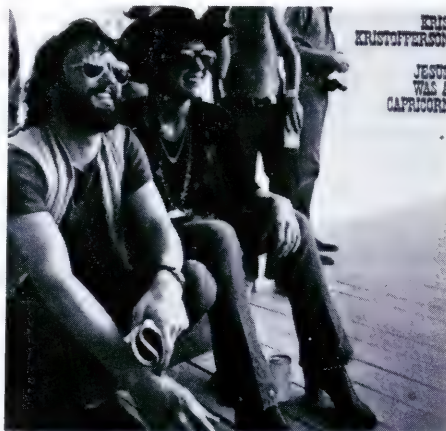
Nashville

against a rebellious, polished and profitable

country music entertainers cultivated a fierce pride in the simplicity of their music as a defense to the put-down, perpetrated particularly by the music industry. Country music performers began to revel in the fact that they could command such loyalty from their fans, despite their lack of recognition.

The country music industry as a whole suffered from an inferiority complex; understanding this phenomenon explains the attitude of Traditional artists towards those of their number who made it on the "outside." The Traditionalists no longer considered a performer who was successful with a different audience as one of their own. Anything out of the realm of hard-core country was contemptuously considered a sell-out. Country Pop artists were accused of "forgetting their roots." In fact, one group of Traditionalists went so far as to form ACE (Association of Country Entertainers), a union designed to fight the "corruption" of country music. These people failed to recognize, many say, that change and growth are inevitable. In an interview with "Country Music" magazine (April, 1979), Cousin Minnie Pearl was asked her opinion of the current rage for Progressive Country. She commented, "When people say, 'Minnie, I'm really worried about the rock influence. These new guys come in here and they've got that rock sound and

they'll ruin the Opry,' I always think I'll die laughing. That's what they said when the first drum was put on there (the stage of the Opry)." She displays an attitude rarely found in one who would definitely be categorized as Traditional. Minnie is well-loved and well-respected in Nashville, but most Traditionalists



have failed to adopt her attitude.

Perhaps the largest stumbling block in the path of Country Pop was the fact that country stations refused to play a record that lacked the traditional wails and twangs. Shunned by the country scene, promoters of these records would approach easy-listening and pop stations, only to be turned away because the record was cut in Nashville. These attitudes served to stifle most of the

creative impulses flowing in Nashville during the 60s and early 70s.

It took the success of outsiders to crack the shell around Music Row. A young Australian woman proved once and for all that the new brand of Country was indeed here to stay. Olivia Newton-John achieved an unprecedented success in both pop and country charts. When she copped the Female Vocalist of the Year at the Country Music Awards in 1974, Traditionalists were outraged that such an outsider could win. Many pointed to the fact that she hadn't even known what country music was until the trade magazines gave her that label. To add insult to injury, Charlie Rich, "The Silver Fox", walked away with the Male Vocalist honors for "Behind Closed Doors". As far as the sequined set was concerned, Charlie had two strikes against him: he had his start in rock 'n' roll, and he had become a major cross-over artist. Their victories marked a distinct new era in country music. At the same time, John Denver, Linda Ronstadt, Charlie Daniels, and the Outlaws were riding high on the charts. These artists contributed a great deal to breaking the fetters binding much of the musical talent in Nashville. They reached a whole new audience--previously untouched by the sounds of country music. Suddenly, young people across the nation were turned on to "Waylon,



Willie, and the Boys."

The success of these stars gave a bevy of country artists the courage to give Nashville's music scene a longtime-coming face-lift. Finally they saw that the sequined set had caused Nashville music to stagnate, and they determined to alter it. Dolly Parton appeared on a recent cover of "Playboy", smiling provocatively, her hair curling gracefully around her face. Could this be the same Dolly notorious for her ridiculous wigs and grotesquely tight costumes? For years she had borne the brunt of jokes; critics of country music laughingly pointed to her as epitomizing the lack of polish abundant among Nashville's stars. Under the management of Charles Koppelman and Macy Lippman, she now enjoys the adoration of both country and pop fans. Her managers guide the careers of stars like Barbra Streisand, Judy Collins, and Olivia Newton-John; they recognized the same superstar potential in Dolly.

Lippman was in Nashville during December for the premiere of "Every Which Way But Loose," the Clint Eastwood movie his company was promoting. When I met him I had no idea who he was. He immediately asked me who my favorite female singers were.



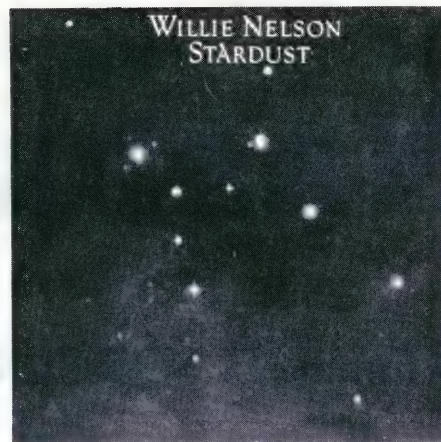
When I replied Barbra Streisand and Dolly Parton, he grinned broadly, "Good, it's working."

As an outsider, from Los Angeles, the bitterness with which much of Nashville has greeted Dolly's success puzzles him. Lippman scoffs at those who criticize Dolly's new image. "We are helping her expand her horizons. People are listening to her now who had never even heard of country music before." Dolly's former partner, Porter Waggoner, reportedly has lashed out with some decidedly unkind remarks about her new style of music. He accused her of "forgetting her roots and going Hollywood." He also indicated that if she would have stayed with him she would have made it big. If the quotations are accurate, Porter was venting frustrations festering along Music Row for years.

An interesting sidenote: Porter himself recently went "disco." He performed at Nashville's popular Exit Inn complete with a disco light show.

Apparently Dolly doesn't feel that nationwide success necessarily signifies a departure from country roots. Lynn Anderson and Tanya Tucker have followed Dolly's lead and have also turned their careers over to Koppelman and Lippman. Take a look at any of their latest album covers. The difference is visible as well as audible. Some newcomers to the ranks include Janie Fricke and Susie Allanson, two to watch in the future. Women in the country music field have traditionally allowed themselves to be manipulated. But these women have apparently developed a new confidence in themselves and their music.

Probably the best-known Progressive Country male vocalist on the Nashville scene today is Kenny Rogers. He takes the accusation that he is forgetting his roots better than most of his colleagues--probably because his roots aren't so firmly in country in the first place. Remember Kenny Rogers and the First Edition? After enjoying moderate success with that group, Rogers decided to transplant to Nashville. There he teamed up with producer Larry Butler. "Lucille" resulted from that union. After the phenomenal success of Roger's first country album, Ken Kragen became his manager. Realizing the tremendously broad base of appeal available to Rogers, Kragen intentionally promoted his music to pop as well as country audiences. As a result of these efforts, Kenny Rogers has emerged as a mainstay in the Progressive



Country Movement. He frequently appears on the Johnny Carson Show, and has even hosted it--an unusual feat for a country artist. He has teamed up with Dottie West to become one of the hottest new duos in country music. A vigorous promotion campaign prefaced the release of "The Gambler," his latest album. It went platinum within a few weeks after shipping. "The Gambler" has been condemned by a few folks who think country should sound twangy and disjointed. "He's just out for a buck!" the Traditionalists rant. Nonetheless, Rogers is obviously comfortable, if wealthy, in his role as King of Progressive Country. A line from a song off "The Gambler":

*I won't make my music for money,
I'll make my music for me.*



Garret Fire

I bow before my brass gas heater
While it glows
Nostalgic orange and purest blue.
I have the flu.

Flames warm me well,
Me and my memories of other days,
When a woman squeezed juice
And Father brought soup and
I in bed in clean brisk sheets
dreamed the dreams of lonely youth.
Now none remain
and I alone
live with these flames.

—W. Dinwiddie





lithograph by Elaine Person

Sand Castles

By Mark Willis

"Are you going to play fair? If you're not, you can't play at all."

"Why?" I asked, even though Matt was older than me, so he knew all the rules.

"Because it wouldn't be right. Everybody has got to play fair and square. No one should cheat."

We were playing mumbletypeg behind the house, and he said I had to flip the knife from each of my fingers and my elbows too, and I said I didn't. It was my knife. It only had one blade; the others were broken.

"I don't want to play anymore," I said, closing up the knife, putting it in my pocket.

"Suit yourself." Matt started for the house.

I followed him in. Maybe Momma and Poppa would have the picnic lunch ready by now, and we'd go to the beach. It was hours since they'd chased us out of the kitchen saying we were getting in the way. I wanted to go to the beach--now. The door slammed hard behind me.

"When are we going to go?" I asked

"In just a minute, Paul." Momma said. She was wrapping sandwiches in wax paper; Poppa was putting Coca-Colas in the ice chest; and Matt was looking at the apples to see if they were soft or not. They were all working very slowly. All the good spots would be taken before we ever got to the beach.

"Let's go," I said.

Poppa turned toward me. Momma smiled, and said:

"If you want to help, you can take the lounge chairs out to the car. Oh, and the umbrella, too."

"I'll help you," Matt said.

I shrugged. It would take them forever to get ready.

Matt and I went outside to the patio. He folded up two of the aluminum chairs and carried them toward the car. I followed, dragging a chair over the sidewalk, enjoying the loud scraping noise.

"Can't you pick that up?" It was Poppa. He carried the ice chest. I shrugged, and pulled the folded chair up to my chin.

Now it seemed like we were almost ready to go. Poppa set the ice chest and chairs in the trunk of the car. Momma came from the house carrying the bags of food.

"Oh," she said, "remember we have to pick up Mother. I think she'd like to get some sun."

Poppa, sighing, said:

"All right. Is she well today?"

"I hope so," Momma said.

"Is Birdie going?" asked Matt, and Momma nodded. "Good. I like it when Birdie goes to the beach with us. Don't you, Paul?"

I nodded. Birdie was okay even if she did call me "Paulie."

"Let's go." I said. We got into the car, and backed out of the driveway. Poppa snarled under his breath when another

car just barely missed hitting us. Our trip had almost ended before we'd begun.

"Damn drivers!" Poppa said. Then he settled behind the wheel, quiet except for his muttering. Momma helped him drive by pointing out stop signs and red lights, humming all the time, softly, as if keeping something to herself.

I wanted to play cows and cemeteries, but Matt said it wouldn't work since we were still in town and there'd be all cemeteries and no cows. He said we'd play once Birdie was with us, and we were out of town.

"Birdie can't play if she calls me 'Paulie'," I said decisively. Matt turned from the window, and said:

"That's mean. Birdie always plays with us."

"Not if she calls me 'Paulie'."

"If you don't let her play, I won't play. Besides, Birdie's fun. Who is it that gives us boxes and things to make sand castles at the beach with, huh?"

Matt was right. Birdie always had a cupboard full of empty oatmeal boxes and orange juice cans for sand castles at the beach. She let us take what we wanted.

"And who is it we always bury in the sand, and who is it that hunts shells with us? Tell me."

"Birdie," I said. Matt was right. Birdie was fun, even if she did call me 'Paulie'. She was the one who refereed our games, and she was the one who told us that we as a family shouldn't cheat each other. I'd have to let her play cows and cemeteries.

"Here we are!" Momma said as we pulled into Birdie's driveway. Poppa stopped the car, and Momma walked up to the old shingled house where Birdie had a room.

A big magnolia tree grew at the corner of the house, its shiny leaves hiding the windows of Birdie's room. Matt always said that the house was scared of the tree because it leaned away from the limbs, afraid of being eaten. Momma hurried back to the car without Birdie.

"She's not here," she said quietly. I had to lean forward to hear her. "Her landlady said she went out early this morning."

"Where?" Poppa's tone was stern.

"Probably the usual place," Momma said. "We need to go get her."

"What about them?" Poppa nodded towards Matt and me.

"It won't matter. They won't notice."

"Where's Birdie?" Matt asked.

"Uh...she walked to the grocery store. We're going to get her." Momma said.

"Can't she find her way home?" Matt asked.

"Probably not." Poppa said. He backed the car out onto the street, driving fast.

"Is she going to the beach with us?" Matt asked.

"I don't know," Momma said, turning her face toward the window.

"Why not?" Matt asked. "She's not 'sick' again, is she?" But Momma just watched the buildings go by. I looked for a cemetery.

Up on the right was a grocery store, and Poppa pulled into its parking lot. He and Momma got out of the car, telling us to stay put. They walked away, not toward the grocery store, but toward a small dark building that shared the parking lot. The building had no windows, but a neon sign glowed above the door. The sign was a flamingo.

"What's going on?" I asked.

"Shut up!" Matt said. He stared at the door of the dark building. I followed his stare.

Soon from beneath the neon flamingo came Momma and Poppa and Birdie. Momma and Poppa were at both sides of Birdie, holding her arms. Birdie tried to shield her eyes against the bright sun. She stumbled on a curb, and looked sick.

"Is she sick, Matt?"

"Shut up!"

They reached the car, and Momma opened the door while Poppa held Birdie. Birdie flopped over to the middle of the

front seat. Poppa and Momma got in, and we drove away fast.

I looked over the seat. Birdie was leaning against Momma, and was playing with the knobs of the radio. Her throat was red. She smelled like cigarettes. I said:

"Are you okay, Birdie?"

"Yeah, boy!" she yelled.

"I'll say she is," said Poppa.

I sat deep in the back seat. Matt's face was turned toward the window. I said:

"Birdie's okay. We can go to the beach, and build sand castles."

"Shut up!" he said. "We're not going today. I never want to go again!"

"Why not?"

"Because...because building sand castles is for little babies!" He turned to stare out the window. I didn't know what the matter was.

In the front seat Birdie had found a station on the radio she liked, and turned it up loud. At the end of the song she yelled out:

"Yeah, boy!"



The Artiste of Montmartre

I

An old diseur in Paris warned her that
The empery of a golden rug worn thin
By disaffected feet, the silver swan
Which swims upon a lake of polished pine,
With hardened candy cradled on its back,
The oft-turned vase which shimmers in the light
That softly sheds beneath the folded blinds,
The vacant chair where once he vainly sat
And framed the smile which fascinated flesh
Should not consort with memory now, but give
Such comfort as may compensate desire.

II

"The silver swan. not as the gift he gave,
From a brief interlude in Montlucon,
Consider only as," he said, "the craft
Of how it glides upon a tabletop,
Of how the glinting ruffles round what there
The old French silversmith could limn against
A mere reality of regal neck,
Of feathers fanned against a pallid pool.
The beauty is that beauty may be served.
And made an oriflamme of carnal faith.
That flesh is frail, and art is absolute."

III

"Or take that vase of tinctured meissenware
He bought for you in Dresden years ago:
The one you call the blue insigne of love.
No human touch can linger in those lines.
The periwinkles in perpetual perse
About the vase forevermore must creep.
Such comfort, as there is, must not regard
Associations of the heart, but touch
Gradations of the mind which may perceive
The china's artisan—the whirler's hand—
As even fainter hues of glazy blue."

IV

"Madame's a relict now," admonishing,
He rises, bows, and then withdraws to join
The crowd that quest to Sacre' Coeur pursues.
Though lectured on the lowlihead of love,
She worships memory in her mewed menage,
And never knows a symbol's pliancy:
The golden rings unravel on the rug;
(The ermined elbow of a Saxon prince
Consigned the vase's mate to showy shards;)
A ductile swan, born of a broodless nest,
Can never feel the water's wet caress.

—Ronald K. Giles

First Place, Sigma Tau Delta Poetry Contest

Snapfinger

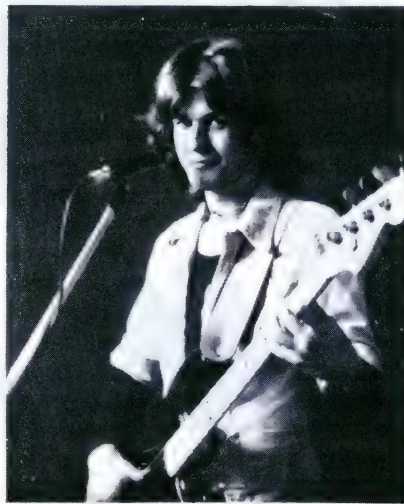
They led two lives as a band-- one for art and one for money. The locally based group is about to break up now, and they come clean.

By Amy Dawes

"Hi. Glad to see so many of you came out tonight." Rob Alexander, lead vocalist and bass guitarist for Snapfinger, grins good-naturedly at the small Thursday night barroom crowd, most of whom are friends and followers of the band. "We're gonna start off with a song that is little more than a flurry of chords, and then we'll get into some stuff that has some real structure—when we feel like it. OK..."

The band's attack is precise, and the ensuing music is clean, loose, and spontaneous in the manner that makes jazz so listenable. The musicians are comfortable, relaxed, and obviously enjoying themselves. Hearing them play, their talent and individual professionalism is undeniable. The crowd breaks into applause even before the sounds have diminished. "Here's a little Chick Corea tune," Rob calls out. The tempo increases and Snapfinger is doing what it likes best.

"If we didn't come here and play jazz, we'd probably go crazy, or quit," Jack Fitzpatrick, Snapfinger's keyboard player, said earlier that evening. Tying with a cold beer in the lounge of downtown B.J.'s, Jack expressed his discontent with commercial music. "The reason we play this gig on weeknights here is really just



to satisfy ourselves. We've got another job on weekends playing Top Forty and disco. Sure, we go out and play the trash...Top Forty is just not challenging musically."

Snapfinger is a band unique to the Auburn area. All five of its members grew up in Auburn and attended Auburn High School, where they met and began playing together as far back as ten years ago. Jack has lived in Auburn for twenty years, and his father, Ben Fitzpatrick, is head of the University's math department. Boston-born percussionist Bill French came to Auburn at the age of six, and his parents, Fran and John D. French, also are faculty members, teaching sociology and physics, respectively. Sax player David Evans was born

and raised in Auburn, and his father, Mike Evans, is a professor of Agronomy. Lead guitarist Alan Hines, like Rob Alexander, moved to Auburn in the ninth grade, and the two met and began playing together the same year.

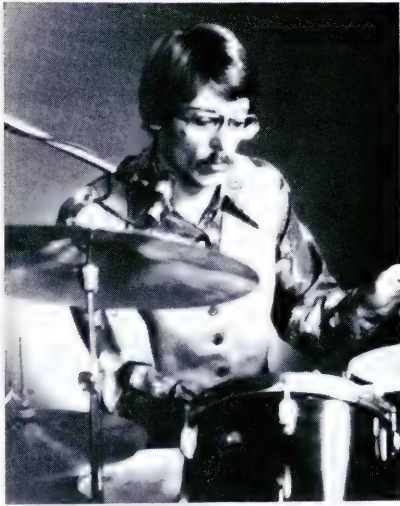
Despite the band's firm Auburn roots, Snapfinger does not bill itself a "Southern band," nor consider itself regionally influenced, though Alan Hines does admit to being a great admirer and imitator of Duane Allman.

"Auburn is not a place where you grow up being Southern," opines David. "My father was educated at Cornell and Purdue, and there are people here from all over, so Auburn is really a cosmopolitan-flavored town." Weather Report, Bob James and Count Basie are among the influences band members cite, and Alan refers to "forty guys in Boston that have never been heard of" from the Berkeley School of Music where he and Rob once studied.

Alan, Rob and Jack were once members of the Top-Forty oriented Menagerie, but they quit to pursue their first love.

"There's not a lot of money in jazz," Rob explains. "But it's the only music besides classical that tries to further music as an art form. Top forty equals money, and jazz equals art."

"You can always find a job doing something else," says Alan, "but it's so rewarding to play jazz music and make it sound good. But you've got to compromise somewhere. You go to all extremes and you'll starve."



"You seem to starve one way or another, though," he continues, slowly. "If you play all disco and no jazz, you miss the musical satisfaction. You just keep playing these two chords over and over again and you think, 'oh, this isn't worth it; this is terribly depressing.' After you play, say, 'Freak Out' three nights a week for a whole year you get so bored that you become like machinery up there playing it."

"There's got to be a distinction made," Jack points out. "There's a Snapfinger jazz band and a Snapfinger dance band. The difference being the jazz band has a sax player (Evans) and the dance band has a black singer, Sharon Alexander." Ms. Alexander, a resident of Columbus, is the exuberant performer who delighted Casino crowds last fall and winter with her Aretha Franklin-style numbers. She continues to join Snapfinger on the road each weekend, and in the dues-paying tradition of the up and coming, Snapfinger is on the road a lot, doing one-nighters all over the South.

"When we're here," says Jack, "We play exactly what we want. When we're at a frat party or a prom, we play exactly what they want. Dress up nice, smile all the time."

"Try to, anyway," Alan laughs. "Playing jazz music during the week kind of makes it easier though. I don't mind so much on the weekends."

"A lot of people don't know what jazz is," Rob points out. "They tend to lump it all into one pile. But if you think of the spectrum of musicians and music

encompassed in the term, rock..." Asked his thoughts about disco and its effects on creativity, Rob answered, "I don't care, really, what people want to like...but a lot of musicians nowadays hear disco songs and they think they're really doing something when they can play them well. The people who are creating these disco songs are studio musicians who stoop beneath their dignity and ability to play them, and these other musicians think they're really good and they're wrong, because there are people who are a thousand times better than them who are willing to lower themselves enough to play that. They couldn't begin to compete."

Jack adds, "A lot of musicians go through a period where they think they're the best there is."



For most of its career, Snapfinger has been chameleon-like in its sudden transformations. Its members, excluding David, have been known to the Auburn community as "Stark Naked and the Car Thieves," "Jack Fitz and the Double Knits," and other unusual aliases deemed unprintable. The band's weekly christening, like the premise of jazz music, was spontaneous, and Jack recalls, "We used to have a lot of fun every Tuesday afternoon, running around trying to find somebody who'd got a good name for a band."

The name "Snapfinger" came about during one such brain-storming session, when it was lifted from the label of a shirt Rob was wearing. The shirt came from the Atlanta-based chain of Snap-

finger clothing stores. The band was applied that label to itself since the end of last summer, when its members began being joined regularly at the Casino nightclub by David Evans and Sharon Alexander. Playing a divided set of jazz and popular music, Snapfinger was the most popular local band in Auburn this year, as well as the most reliable source of good entertainment. Students and locals packed the Casino weekly to enjoy their music, and Snapfinger became something of an Auburn entertainment institution, and one that will be sorely missed when the band breaks up this summer.

Jack says the band is breaking up because "we can't afford to buy the equipment to maintain the level of band that we want to be."

"But that's not the only reason," argues Bill French. "Not all of us want to do what Snapfinger does." Bill, who will graduate this quarter in sociology, is heading for Los Angeles this summer to take advantage of an opportunity to break into the music business.

"Some people I've worked with before got involved in the recording industry and they called me and said, 'Hey, let's get together,'" he explains. "The most determining factor for success as a musician is getting involved in the industry." In this case, that means going to L.A., but having spent three years drumming in studios in Brazil, Bill is no stranger to far-away places. "I don't know what to say about my future," he says. "From what I know of the recording industry, it's really very volatile, very sporadic...it's hard to plan for



it, but I think you have to plan for it more than anything else *because* it's so sporadic. I'll just go out there and make myself available. I'm very tired of being poor."

David Evans, who is a freshman majoring in music, will continue his education at Auburn, but Rob, Alan and Jack are uncertain about their plans, though they feel reasonably sure they will remain in the area as musicians. Alan is considering returning to the

music school in Boston to get his degree. "A degree in music gets you the ability to teach," says Jack, "but it won't get you a job playing. If you walk in waving a degree, they're likely to say 'get out of here' before you even have a chance to play."

With this in mind, Rob is trying another approach—writing. "I've written a variety of songs," he says. "Pseudo-jazz tunes, rock 'n' roll, disco-type songs...it's the only possibility I see

for success."

Success is the magic word, and in the fiercely competitive world of music, it is the bird in the bush worth ten in the hand if it can ever be grasped. Whether success will come in a degree that allows any artistic freedom, or in the form of that outrageous new version of the American dream, superstardom, it is a possibility that can never be far from the minds of these talented Auburn musicians.

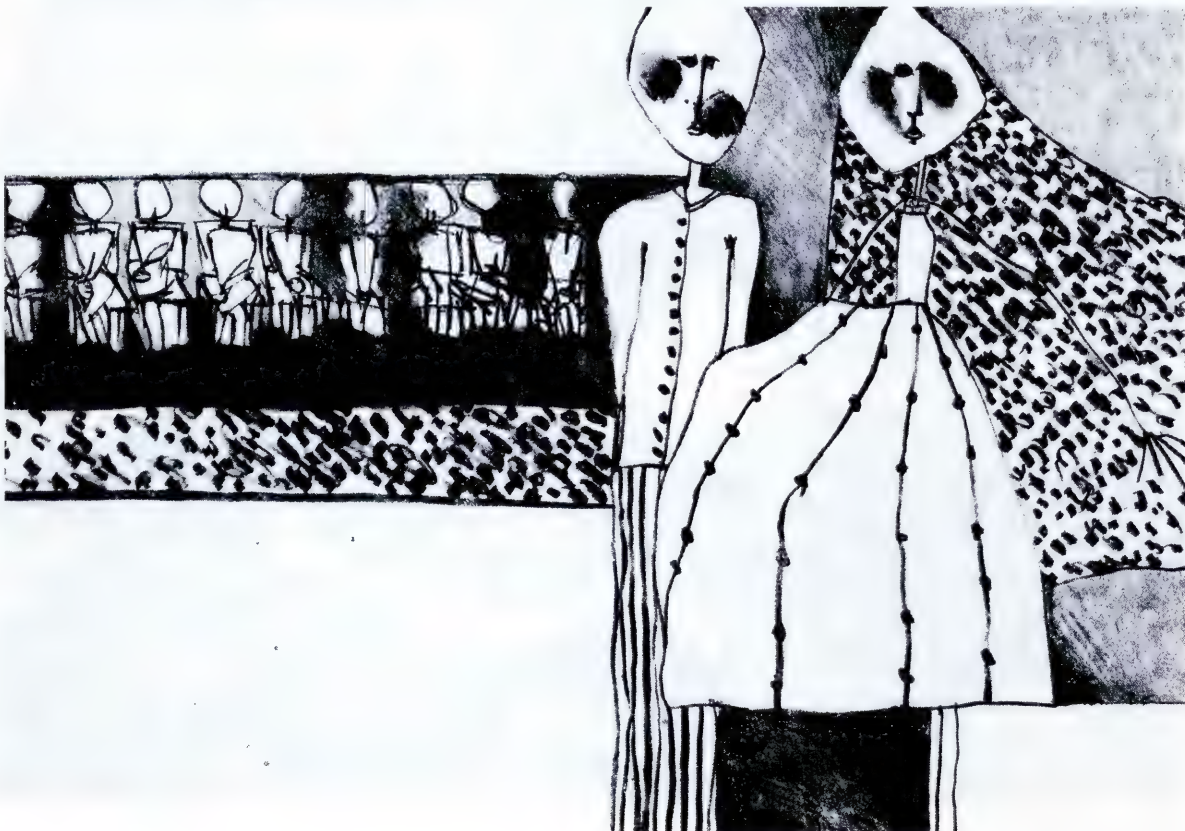


A guy from Selma met a girl from Jamaica on their trips to N.Y.

Saw her in the wormy Apple.
For a sec, had to grapple
With his homeland South—
Fast drowned in her almond mouth.
Was pressed hard to take a
Smooth sip of Jamaica.
So he sips
From the lips,
From twix the slender hips,
Twix dancer legs, sinewy thin,
Taut coffee-colored—or tea—skin.
The crashing Caribbean
He hears
(Really blood rushing past ear's
drum).

"Come,
Come to Jamaica," what a tourism commercial.
Dials the phone, he says, "Hello, Hershel?
I'm bringing home a black girl, Mama's gotta be prepared.
Hello, Hello, Hershel are you there?"
His family was close, you might say klannish.
And so the black sheep (no pun) was banished.
Poor bastard, poor slob,
In a poor country sans job.
Still he lives like a prince,
Laughing at Hershel and kin since
He and lover live in idyllic expatriation
Off her father, who owns a multi-national corporation.

—Mark C. Winne



lithograph by Tara Adams

Biloxi Summer

Hot summer sun's turning me brown
And the ice cold beer's going down easy
I'm out on the wire one more time
Going nowhere is where I want to go
Rednecks and freaks drive the beach
Drink their beer, smoke their pot
Coming about one more time
Going out to sea, let's go

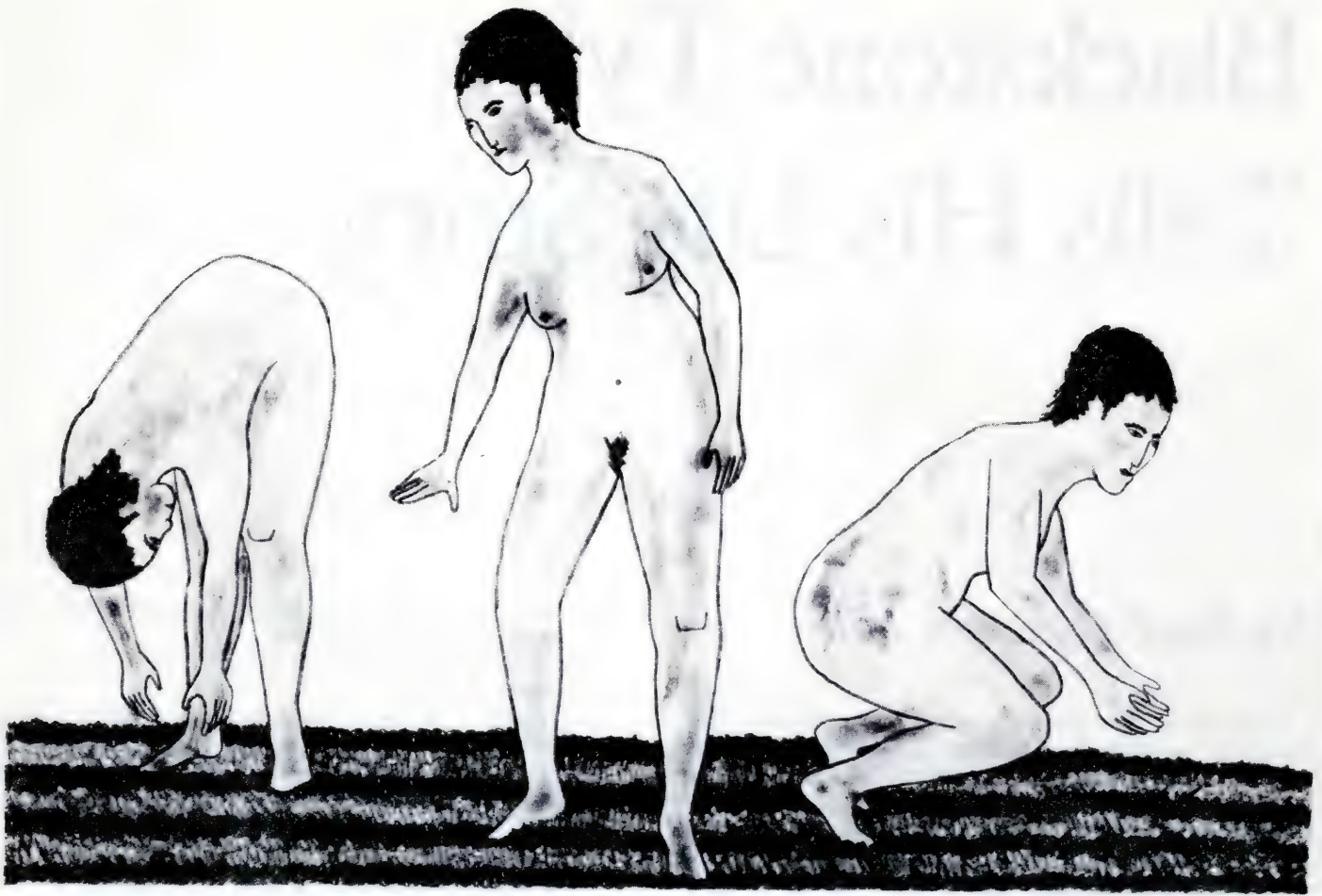
In smoky barrooms every night
We share our dreams and fears
We tell each other everything except
What we really mean
Lonely airmen search for lonely girls
The man at the door looks for ID's
And we fool 'em everytime I come in
I'm out on the wire again.

We never get up and dance in here
Cuz dancing's just not our game
We've both got different places to go
When this crazy summer ends
So we drink and drink and talk
About what tomorrow might be.
I just hope I'll be out on the wire again.

Hot summer sun's turning me brown
The beer's still going down smooth
I'm out on the wire again today
But tomorrow it's back to school
Rednecks and freaks still drive the beach
Drinking their beer, smoking their pot
Coming across the finish line
Tomorrow we'll be back to work.

—Kathanne W. Greene





It Is Everything

the sun sinks cruelly it
leaves the shadow creeping
around us
sneaking into our homes
before the night is pitched

I dream in the east some
things bright like bleeding eyes
are being counted
piled in the earth where the light
will crawl up again

the light from the lamp lays
on my lap like
a white cat
creases of shadows hanging
in the fur of light

—Dean Wiseman Golden

Lines

You and me and she,
finite lines touching, by chance,
forming, for a moment,
a not quite right triangle.
This I say being hypotenuse
subtending you and she, dissimilar,
not fitting, but wedging
my length between you two—
you and she, sides the same,
conjoined by a greater degree
than that linking you with me.
Yet if ever you believe our bond weaker
because of my degree being the lesser,
or if ever you doubt my constancy,
if ever these my points you question,
then question, too, exact Pythagoras.

—M.H. Anderson

lithograph by Elaine Dellinger

Blackstone Tyler Tells His Life Story

By Fred Donovan Hill

Okay, the son-of-a-bitchin' machine is on. And now, Dan Kluzewski, you Polock, or Jew-boy or Catholic or whatever you are, I'm goin' to pour in all the crap you say you want. Don't mind what I just said. You're a pretty good guy, Dan. Even for a big city writer—and a Jew or Catholic or whatever foreign religion you are. I *am* a little like old Elvis was, though, about the Catholics and the Jews. Just can't help it. My upbringing, I guess. Even though I've known some pretty good guys like you and should know better by now, I'm still a little bigoted...But, hell, you told me not to talk about religion anyway. Said I'd be sure to offend somebody. Hell, I'd offend *everybody*, Dan. Cause I don't believe in nothin' much—except myself. Anyway, I'll leave them religious stories to John Cash and them like him. Naw, you said to tell you about sex and money and the country music business and about what I like to do—if anything—when I ain't either screwin' or playin' concerts. All right, Dan. I'm goin' to try. I'm goin' to try. And you can clean up the English later.

I aint goin' to be too exact with the figures, but I won't lie to you no more that I would the I.R.S. Ha-ha-ha! But see, Dan, I been beatin' my brains out—and beatin' the strings out of a couple of dozen guitars—for thirty years. Yeah, since I was ten years old I been playin' somewhere for money, and so, fellow, when I can clear a few thousand from a one-night stand, well, I feel grand about it! Damn great feelin'! No guilt at all, son. No guilt at all. And I *do* have a few of them nights. Anytime I play a place at least as big as Montgomery I do all right. And I'm helpin' pay off the costs of them big new municipal auditoriums in places like Birmingham. So you could say I'm bein' a good citizen. Matter of fact, you might get that in the book someday, Dan. And also about my visits to the veterans' and childrens' hospitals. That wouldn't hurt, would it? I mean I know I'm a hoss and a swinger and maybe sort of a son-of-a-bitch, but maybe you could put in a little of the good I've done, too. Okay, Jew-boy? A-w-w-w right-t! as the black folks say.

Now you said you wanted me to start out with the way I live

now and how my life's been since I made it in Music City...

George is drinkin' by the bar
And Junior's tinkerin' with his car
In Redneck Heaven!

Oh, sorry, Dan, them's lines from a new song I'm writin' called "Redneck Heaven." We think it's goin' to be another big one. Another number-one hit, we hope. I'm shootin' for five straight self-written and self-recorded number-one songs. Be good, too, if "Redneck Heaven" hits about the time we get the book out.

But all right—the way I live now. Don't overdo this, Dan, but I'm as tired as a whipped mule after twelve hours in the field. You know, people out there look at a performer and they think he's got it made. But the truth is we're all runnin' scared, Dan. Again, don't put all this in, but I mean we have to move our asses. And I don't mean just on stage neither. Ha! (Old Elvis is dead. Hard to believe, ain't it? Just two years older than me. And he's deader'n hell. I'll put in some stuff about him on the last tape, Dan, like you asked me to). Naw, you just think about it—us performers in country music are out two hundred to three hundred nights a year doin' our thing. Now you think that won't wear your ass out, Dan? And yet we *got* to do it. There's so much competition. Hellfire, there's new ones on the air nearly every day. I mean look at that guy from—of all places—Brooklyn. That what's his name?...Rabbitt. Eddie Rabbitt. He's streakin'. Rabbitt. Good name for the bastard. And that's how it is. You let up a little—in your recordin' or your concert dates (which always helps them records)—and somebody like that Rabbitt will run right by you. And then you always got to be developin' new material and watchin' what others are comin' out with. So it's a mental strain as well as a physical strain, Dan. A song—even a big hit like "Love Got In The Way"—ain't goin' to keep you in front of the public more than three or four months. A little song won't play more than a few weeks.

So we're one the road two-thirds of the time. It's no wonder so many of us get on the drugs, no wonder so many of us is drunks, and, of course, it has something to do with so many divorces in the business. Can't be out away from home so much and keep a marriage goin' right, you know. Oh, a few of them can manage or seem to. But it just ain't worked

for me. I mean a wife can visit you in Tulsa or Dallas or someplace and share the back room of your tour bus with you a few hours. But pretty soon she begins to feel like part of the tour. Somebody needs a sandwich or a button sewed on or wants her to hear a new lick. And the gang is constantly comin' back to tell me something I've got to know about arrangements for that night's show or what plans we got for the next day. Tapes are goin' and instruments are bein' tuned and somebody's laughin' too loud. Somebody's gettin' drunk. It ain't too romantic in the back of the bus, Dan. And I can't just take a wife and check into a hotel. I'm too well-known now.

Then, of course, if she's with you in San Antone for a one-night stand, well, you got to be in Louisville the next night. So you don't hardly have time to stretch out good before you got to be up and gone again. Not many wives are willin' to jump around like that. And you know, Dan, how damn crazy women can be. They get jealous cause they see you get a little attention from some other female. Yeah, we have our groupies, too, in country music. Them pop stars don't get all the stuff. And we get young ones and old ones and them inbetween. Prob'ly a better range than them pop stars do. Oh, it's a rich range, Dan. And I've done some grazin' in it. Oh, yeah! "Grazin' In Greener Pastures." I ain't gettin' too literary on you now, Dan. I just had in mind that song Ray Price did some years back. Man, that old boy is really good. I still think that next to me he's got the best voice around. Don't put that in the book, Dan. Just say something like "Blackstone Tyler is a modest man, but he knows his ability. About his singing style, he says, 'It ain't bad.' " How about that, big-city Yankee writer!? I can turn off them phrases, too *when I want to*. And that reminds me of something that always makes me mad! You big-city Easterners usually put us down as a bunch of dumb, rhinestone-suited clowns. But, hell, fellow, we got some bright people in this business. Dolly and Merle and Kris and Waylon and Willie. Just to name a handful. You take that song of Dolly's, "To Daddy," or look at old Merle's "If We Make It Through December." Hell, man, that's literature. There's real feelin' and insight in them songs. They make you feel for other people, make you realize how hard life is for the average man and woman. May even make you do something good for everybody... And, hell, Dan, that Kristofferson's a Rhodes Scholar. No shit. He's nearly as bright as me. So don't let your chums knock us too much. We ain't all dumb and some of us have got some real talent.

I guess I'm goin' on too much about that, but it's a sore point with me and I hope you'll get these opinions in the book. After all, you told me to "narrate *and* *opinionate*." Ain't that how you put it? But I'm tryin' to hold it in the road. You said you wanted the first tape to tell you about my life and the music business now. Then on the second one I ought to tell you how I grew up, and how I became a star in country music—"Like a rhinestone cowboy"—and about my marriages and family relations and so on. And then on a third tape you want me to tell what I think about this and that, what I hope to do in the future, and just generally wrap it up, right? Okay, Dan, I'm doin' it best I can. But you can straighten it out and stretch it out later. And you may have to *cancel it some*. I may get too low-down here and there. But I'm goin' to go ahead and talk free the way I been doin' and you can take it from there. But don't let me—that is, us—get sued.

All right, I'll keep on pluckin'. The biggest thing in my life right now ain't the string of number one songs I've had the past year, it ain't bein' voted Performer of the Year, and it ain't bein' voted Country Songwriter of the Year. The biggest thing in my life right now is a twenty-one-year-old waitress in a classy restaurant in Nashville. Yeah, Dan, that's right. A twenty-one year old waitress. See, there's this place out near the Parthenon that we've got to rentin' for parties. We rent it for a whole night and use the whole place for a private party. Naw, not just me and the waitress! The band, agents, tour people, friends in the business, some D.J.'s—I invite all of them for a night of eatin' and drinkin' and beddin', too, if they can make out. There's a small motel behind this place and we rent out all the rooms for that night. So we get everything squared away. And we hire a few tough security guards, some off-duty policemen, in addition to my own security people, and they keep everybody away, especially reporters that might have gotten wind of something goin' on—and we throw us one hell of a party.

Well, the first time I walked into this place about three weeks ago, I see this little cocktail waitress...Ha! Cocktail waitress. That's a hell of a name for it, ain't it, Dan? But that's what they call themselves...Anyway, I walk in this very plush place with all these Greek columns and ivy vines and purple and pink urns and a huge red-and-gold bar with everything on earth a man could want to drink—and there beside the bar stands this gorgeous little blonde in one of them Greek costumes. You know, short, tight, white, thin, skimpy, and with a little gold sash around the middle. You can tell, Dan, how she hit me cause I remember every detail of this minute I first saw her. See, they'd fixed this place up



to go with the Parthenon atmosphere. That's their theme—or whatever you'd call it. And it's a damn fine place. But after I see this little waitress, I don't see nothin' else. I could of been sittin' on the side of a hill drinkin' water from a Mason jar. I didn't hardly know where I was the rest of the night. Oh, I drank Black Jack and water all right. I funneled them down. But they were just excuses to get her to come back to the booth. But I'm gettin' ahead of the story. Let me tell you how it happened.

See, the management had picked her out to take care of my booth cause she was the sharpest-lookin' gal in the place. So as soon as I turn and move towards a booth she glides over and says, "Hello, Mr. Tyler. Right this way."

My lead guitarist, Mack Sloan, and my agent, Carl Daniels, are with me, and I look at them and they're bug-eyed, too, watchin' her ass and her legs as she leads us down the aisle to where she was seatin' us. Dan, I tell you, what a body! Big, well-rounded breasts and a beautiful ass and that golden hair fallin' all the way down her back. When we fall into our booth, she smiles down at us like a angel and says, "Now, how can I help you gentlemen?" She's got the most heart-breakin' smile you ever saw, Dan. And the creamiest skin I've ever seen. Looks like she ought to melt like ice cream. Soft, feminine flesh. None of that hard, fried chicken, Hollywood look you rich Yankees like, Dan. Naw, man, she's just about perfect.

After the third or fourth whiskey I start encouragin' her to come on and sit down with us and have a drink. Course she says the management wouldn't allow such a thing. She'd lose her job and all that.

"Look, honey," I say, "I'll get you a better job. Right, Carl?"

"Sure," Carl Daniels says, laughin' his head off. Carl gets pretty damn silly after a few little snorts.

"I'm sorry, Mr. Tyler," Miss Parthenon says. "I've enjoyed serving you, but if you give me trouble I won't think very well of you."

I slow down fast. "I'm sorry," I say. "You're right, sugar. You *could* get in trouble. Well, you just keep comin' back about every twenty minutes, okay? We'll see you get a big tip out of this. And don't take us too serious. We're all lettin' off steam tonight. But we won't hurt you or get you in no trouble."

"Thank you, Mr. Tyler." She smiles the devastatin' smile and walks away.

I sit there then for maybe five minutes just starin' in my glass and not sayin' anything. Mack and Carl are kind of fidgetin' and gigglin' and exchangin' knowing looks. Finally Carl says, "why don't we go back and mingle with some of the broads in the other room? They're dancin' back there. Sounds like they're havin' a good time."

"Ya'll go on if you want to," I say. "I ain't movin'."

I could see Carl expected I might cause some trouble and he didn't care to be in the immediate area. See, Dan, my reputation for bein' difficult at times is well-deserved. I admit it. Oh, it ain't often I do something crazy. But once in a while I just haul off and do it! Well, old Carl can sense by now when the storm may be comin'.

Mack and Carl went on back to the ballroom. I sat and brooded over my Jack Daniels. Course I guess, Dan, I'm sort of spoiled when it comes to women. Since I made it big, I been able to get the ones I want. Now here I'd been hit as hard as I could ever remember and the little bitch wouldn't

come down off of her cloud a bit. Well, I'm persistent. I'd be patient and try to be polite...Then I happen to pull my nose up out of my glass and I see her headin' towards a exit with a heavy topcoat on. I leap up and knock over a chair and run after her. I follow her down a hallway leadin' out of the place.

"Hey, Miss Parthenon!" I yell. "You ain't leavin', are you?"

"Yes, Mr. Tyler. It's a shift change. I got off at midnight—a few minutes ago."

She stands there smilin', all very pleasant and cool and beautiful as a Greek statue. I stand by her feelin' as helpless as a stray dog.

"Well, damn, I sure hate that. I wish you'd of said goodbye at least. And here let me give you your tip." I pull out a fat roll and peel off a hundred dollar bill.

"No, Mr. Tyler, I don't want your money," she says. "Thanks, anyway."

"But it's your *tip*, honey. You deserve it."

"No...that's not necessary, really," she says, still smilin' coolly at me.

"Here, take it, *please*," I say, and I begin tryin' to cram it in her coat pocket.

"Please, Mr. Tyler. Don't be so obstreperous," she says, pushing my hand away.

"Don't be so *what*?" I ask (I asked about the word later, Dan, and found out what it meant. Damn!).

"I'm tired. I really have to go. Good night. Enjoy your party." She starts openin' the door. I grab her wrist.

"Well, look, I know you think I'm a clown. What are *you* anyway? One of them rich little Vanderbilt coeds, workin' a little on the side for the 'experience'?"

She laughs and says, "That's quite perceptive, Mr. Tyler. That's exactly what I am."

"Oh, I ain't as dumb as I act."

"No one could be that dumb, sir."

She pulls away and is gone in the night. I stand there cut clean to the bone. I mean, Dan, I'm bleedin'! But you know something? I ain't ashamed to admit that right then I wanted her more than I've ever wanted anything in my life. I mean I knew I'd met something super-special. Something like this old boy had never known before. And I stood there baffled as all hell as to what in the world I could do about it.

Well, I stumble up to the red-and-gold bar and order another drink. I see myself in the bar mirror and I sure as hell look beat. My eyes is red, my face sort of pale and puffy, and I can see the little curls of grey comin' out of the black. I look at least forty, all right. Maybe a day or two older, I say to myself, tryin' to laugh it off. Hell, I think, I'm nearly twice her age. Makin' a damn fool of myself. No wonder she ain't interested...But then I think about them young groupies of mine. A couple of them especially that I'd bedded down with just couldn't get enough of old Ty. I start feelin' better, Dan. I look at the four bartenders workin' their asses off to keep up with the orders from a couple of hundred people and I say to the one who wears a black jacket and seems to be in charge, "Say, Mr. Bartender, how about lettin' your assistants handle it a while. I'd like to talk to you."

"Yes sir, Mr. Tyler, what can I do for you?"

"I need a little information."

"All right, sir. I'll help you if I can."

"This girl that waited on us...The one that just left. What's her name?"

"Cheryl Hart."

"Cheryl Hart," I say slowly. "Nice name. Suits her."

"Yes sir, she's a fine one."

"You wouldn't mind givin' me her phone number, would you?"

"Well, sir, I don't think I really should do that. She has an unlisted number."

"But you *do* have it, don't you? I mean you prob'ly have to call her about workin' and all..."

"I do...but I..."

"Look, here's a hundred," I say, whippin' out the bill I'd tried to give Cheryl Hart. "It's worth that much to me. She won't ever know how I got it. I swear that."

The bartender took out a little blue book from his hip pocket and went through the alphabetical listing.

"It's 810-0243."

"Thanks, fellow."

"Thank you, sir," he says, wipin' the bill off the bar.

Well, Dan I spent a lot of my time punchin' dimes into a pay phone the rest of that night and morning and day until the party closed down and some guys in the band drug me off to catch our chartered flight to Dallas. But I never got a answer that whole time, not the thirty or forty times I tried. And that whole day after I was a lovesick as a fifteen year old kid. Hurtin' like I never thought I would—or could—again. Now you're about my age, Dan, and you may be laughin' at this. But don't laugh too much, son, cause it could sure happen to you, too.

But I went on and did a hell of a good show that night in Dallas, Dan! That's one thing I can do. No matter what's happenin' I go out and give the people their money's worth and a hell of a lot more. I'm one of the pros in this business. So I went out on stage that night and sang as best I could, gave it all I had. The people loved it and I drew strength from them. Cause it works both ways, Dan. But the time I'd finished the show and the three encores they gave me, I was feelin' a whole lot better. So I got on the phone before I even took my make-up off.

"Hello," Cheryl Hart says.

"Hello, now please don't hang up on me before you hear me out," I say.

"Who is this?" she asks.

"Blackstone Tyler."

"How...how did you get my number, Mr. Tyler?"

"Never mind. I don't mean you any harm, Miss Hart. I just wanted to call and apologize about how I acted last night. You were right to say what you did. I'm sorry. I was pretty drunk. I know how to act, but I just got carried away. You impressed me more than anybody I'd met in a long time. I really wanted to talk to you..."

"All right. I accept your apology, Mr. Tyler. But, really, it isn't necessary."

"Oh, yeah, it is. I just couldn't stand the idea of you hatin' me."

She laughs and says, "It wasn't *that* serious."

I could feel her slippin' away from me again. "Look, I want to make up for it," I say. "I'm performin' out at Opryland Saturday. Why don't you and a couple of your girlfriends come out to the show? I'll get Carl to send you some tickets. You been to Opryland before?"

"No...but..."

"All right. Then y'all just come on out. We'll send you tickets for everything out there. You don't even have to come to my old country show if you don't want to. You can see the

contemporary show. Then you can just enjoy the place on us. Get you a good dinner at one of the restaurants. And you don't even have to see none of us if you don't want to.. Still, if you come to my show and you want to come backstage—the three or four of you—I'll tell my security people to let you back.—Now, that's fair enough, ain't it?"

"Yes, Mr. Tyler. All right, we'll do that. It might be interesting."

I didn't exactly like the way she said, "interesting," but I swallowed my pride again.

"Well, that's great," I say. "And I sure hope I'll see you in my audience and after the show. But if I don't, that's okay. Y'all just have a good time...I'm here in Dallas tonight, and I got to go over and do a Austin City Limits show. But I'll be at Opryland Saturday."

"You're calling me from *Dallas*?" she asks. For the first time she sounds a little impressed.



"Sure. I'd of called *you* from London."

She laughed again. "Well, you certainly don't give up easily, do you?"

"If I did, honey, I'd of been dead before now."

"We'll be out there Saturday. Thank you, and goodbye, Mr. Tyler."

I hung up and began to think right away of how I'd try to handle it. Course I went through hell all that week, Dan. Thinkin' she might not show—at least not at my performance. But on Saturday there she was with a couple of her girlfriends in the third row of the Opry House. I'm happy as a grit-fed hound! I sing like a son-of-a-bitch and do everything the best I can and when I do "Waltz Across Texas" I think she really likes it, Dan! At least she told me she did when her and her friends came backstage.

And, man, did we have us a good time! I got a couple of my younger band members to go along with her friends. I put on some dark glasses and some old Levis and an old plaid shirt so maybe I wouldn't be recognized by the crowds, and we went out in the park and on the rides and to two or three shows and to a couple of restaurants. I'd seen I couldn't push this girl into nothin', and so I just relaxed and I guess you could say I sort of played Big Daddy and laughed and joked and bought them everything they wanted. Then we was goin' out across the lake in one of them motor-powered rafts, and I turn to Cheryl Hart and I say, "See, Cheryl, old Ty ain't all bad."

"I never thought you were, Mr. Tyler."

"Call me Ty. Just Ty. That's what my friends call me."

"All right, Ty," she says, laughin'.

She was as gorgeous out in the open as she was in that restaurant. She was wearin' a red pants suit with a little white silk scarf and her blonde hair was flyin' in the sun. I felt twenty-five again, Dan. I almost took her hand in mine. I moved my hand towards her a ways and then took it back. There's something wonderful about her, Dan. I couldn't touch her, though I wanted to more than anything. I didn't want to do anything, though, to offend her. I felt like I made

one mistake and she'd be gone! Now how about tht, Dan? Blackstone Tyler, one of the Kings of Country Music, used to takin' whatever he wants. And there I am ridin' in a motorized raft with a twenty-one year old kid who's got me all tied up in knots. So tied up I can't even touch her hand.

Now that was two weeks ago and I been on the road the whole time since. I called, though, every night and about half the time I been able to reach her. We've had us some good talks on the phone. But, hell, Dan, truth is, I ain't been able to convince her to go out with me again. When I get back to Nashville I may just go over to her apartment and beat on the door till she answers or wait around till she comes in. That way I'll be sure to see her again. All right, I know, that sounds like a crazy fool thing to do, but if you had seen her, Dan, you'd know she's worth it. And you wouldn't blame me for feelin' sort of desperate.

So you asked me to tell you about how my life is now. Well, I've never been more successful, but because of Cheryl Hart I'm miserable. I guess that's just human nature. A lot of things can be goin' right for you, but if there's one thing you want more than anything else and you can't have it, you're miserable. Sort of like Adam and Eve, ain't it?

Running: The Mental Pace

By Drue Denise Prior

Stretch. Lunge. Relax. Sleepy muscles and tendons begin to awake. Breathe deeply. Exhale. The heart and lungs are alive. Now begin—left, right, left, right; the legs start slowly and build to a comfortable pace. The body must work rhythmically. Pace and breathe: left-right-in-in-left-right-out-out. Lungs and legs become one. The body functions smoothly, like the peddling of a bicycle. Then run begins; the work is physical, but the reward is mental.

The body is synchronized. Feet cadence heavily on the pavement; brawn and organs throb. As sweat trickles slowly from the skin, biochemicals ooze from muscle to muscle. Every inch of body tingles from the intensity of the exercise. Legs jolt as they battle gravity to move the body against the force. Each time an ankle absorbs the shock of a hundred-fifty-pounds-plus bouncing on pavement, a pain jabs at it and crawls up the shin. The heart palpitates furiously as it drives blood out through arteries and greedily pulls it back through veins. Adrenal secretions cause the heart to work harder and faster until the blood pressure rises. Lungs labor mechanically

to keep the blood fertile with oxygen. Physical and mental tension builds; the mind can no longer focus. A stitch penetrates the abdomen, but the escaping mind overpowers the pain. Reality no longer exists; there are no roads, no cars, no other people—only the fantasies of the runner.

...It's the Olympic marathon, and Frank Shorter is somewhere—miles behind...The room is dark, a candle flickers, the wine glasses are empty and the music floats softly through the air. Eyes meet—"I love you."...The play has been called—five seconds to go and the score is tied. The team begins to move. The quarterback prepares to pass—FOUR. He throws—THREE. It's complete—TWO. Touchdown! The swell of mental excitement begins to calm...an evening at the disco—dancing and drinking...Finally the mind sobers and returns to the left, right, left, right; the runner's destination is ahead.

The runner becomes aware of the physical strain on the body as mind and flesh rejoin. The energy has been drained from the muscles and they begin to feel numb. The pace slows; the heart

and lungs calm. Droplets of salty sweat fall, but are not replaced. Though deceptively weak, the body is stronger. Harmful, useless calories have evaporated like the sweat, and fat tissues have dissolved. Convulsing leg muscles are tense and powerful; the heart beat is vigorous and sturdy. The mind is sedate.

Breathe. Stretch. The muscles are tired; the mind is peaceful. Exhale. Relax. The bliss and the pain—it is all over until the next time.

Above the Clouds

I am a cloud,
floating along through Life
seeing much of everything,
yet I've moved so far from Earth
till I'm more spacey than cloudy,
my innerness overflowing
like rain filling a cloud
threatening to burst
during an insane moment.

—Kathy Hartsell

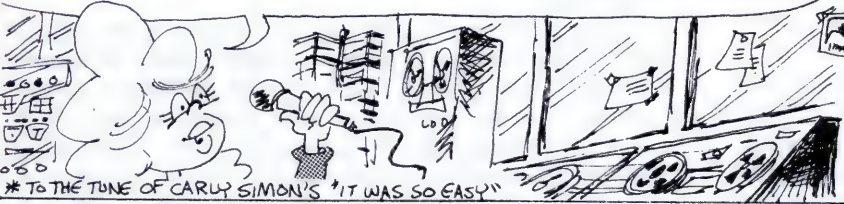
FENTON FARNSWORTH

GETS DOWN!

by Bill Holbrook



ONE...TWO...THREE...* A **CULT** IS ON THE RISE THAT THREATENS ONE AND ALL ALREADY IT HAS **MILLIONS** IN ITS HANDS. MINDLESS, SPINELESS, ZOMBIE-LIKE, ALWAYS WITH VACANT EYES THEY GYRATE TO THEIR LEADER'S MERE COMMANDS!

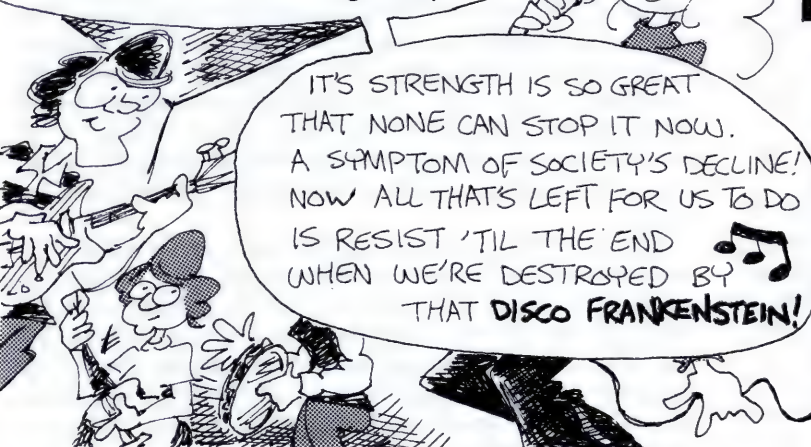


IT'S CALLED THE **DISCO CRAZE** AND THE BEE-GEES HAVE CONTROL. IT'S CALLED THE **DISCO CRAZE** THEY'LL STEAL YOUR **SOUL**!



THIS INSIDIOUS PLAGUE IS SPREAD BY RADIO. THEY PERFORM **REMOTE-CONTROL LOBOTOMIES!** THEY HERD THEIR VICTIMS INTO ROOMS WHERE THEIR **PERSONALITIES** AND SPIRIT ARE REMOVED 'TIL THE ONLY THING THEY CARE FOR IS THEIR SHOES!

IT'S CALLED THE **DISCO CRAZE** **DONNA SUMMER** HAS CONTROL. IT'S CALLED THE **DISCO CRAZE** SHE'LL STEAL YOUR **SOUL**!



IT'S CALLED THE **DISCO CRAZE** AND I'LL **FIGHT** TO KEEP CONTROL! I'LL ONLY LISTEN TO **BILLY JOEL**!



IT'S STRENGTH IS SO GREAT THAT NONE CAN STOP IT NOW. A SYMPTOM OF SOCIETY'S DECLINE! NOW ALL THAT'S LEFT FOR US TO DO IS RESIST 'TIL THE END WHEN WE'RE DESTROYED BY THAT **DISCO FRANKENSTEIN**!

SOUNDS GREAT, JENNIFER! NOW LET'S TRY IT WITH A **HEAVY BASS BEAT**!



The Religion Of Brownn

By Guy Parsons

TO: His Royal Highness: PUDITSMAI VII $\frac{1}{4}$; Supreme Emperor of Mars, Dictator of Saturn, Protectorate of Earth, Commander of Armed Legions, Leader of the Faithful etc.

FROM: His Majesty's loyal archeologists; doing what little they can to increase the awesome sum of His Majesty's unquestionable knowledge, by whatever pitiful amount is within their miniscule power.

RE: The lifestyles of the former inhabitants of Earth; that plant having been destroyed by those inhabitants shortly before we achieved space travel under his excellency MUDMAI III5-8.

As his majesty well remembers, the inhabitants of Earth destroyed their own planet by activation of thermonuclear devices set upon major fault lines of the continental masses. This action was taken when one of the four major powers, all of whom were engaged in a global-wide conflict, foresaw that they could not possibly win the conflict. The consequential detonation of the thermonuclear devices initiated spontaneous magmeous eruption and seismic oscillation of the continental masses, with subsequent readjustment of the Mohorivic discontinuity.*

*It caused earthquakes and volcanoes. Ed.

It was commonly believed that the entire surface of the planet had been destroyed. But, after intensive study of Suluclac's "Primary Order Model" equations, the possibility arose of finding areas with relatively little damage. With the aid of computer enhanced prediction and maser-imaging we were able to find three areas of likely value. Two of the areas were in what had been unpopulated regions, and thus were withheld for later investigation.

The third area was the location of a socioeconomicgeothnicreligiouspolitical concentration that Terrans called "sittees". This particular sittee was known as "Auburn, AL. 36830" and located in the geographic region called "Area Code 205". Most of the inhabitants simply referred to it as "Auburn," which translates into "Brownn" in our language.

Brownn appears to have been a religious institute of major importance to the surrounding area. It, like many other religious institutes, was called by the subname "Univ." Some of our linguistic scholars feel that the name is a corruption of the word "Universe," meaning "All that exists." Still others find the origin in the word "uni" meaning one. The "v" part seemed to have some connection with power. The earliest ballistic missiles were called "V-2," and many of the personal land transportation devices were powered with "V-6",

"V-8", and an occasional "V-12."

Brownn was a polytheistic institution. Yet most people worshipped one god, perhaps with several sub-deities. The principal god was called "futball". All the gods were grouped into something called "sports". Those who did not worship one of the sports were called "eggheads" or perhaps "wimps".

Futball demands vast temples called "stadiums." Many a univ would go into debt to build one of these temples; even at the expense of other parts of the institution. Inside the stadium there would be a large grass field, marked off with white lines in ten divisions to form a rectangle. At each end of the rectangle an altar would be erected. The altar was made of a horizontal crossbar with vertical bars at each end. All around the field seats would be erected for the huge number of worshippers.

To play futball two teams would be chosen, they would wear padding and a hat with an attached mask to conceal their true identity. This allowed them to assume a new identity, which was painted on their clothes in the form of numbers. The leaders of each team would meet in the middle of the field and grab each other's arms and shake it vigorously to dislodge any hidden weapons. Then the head priests would come out, wearing shirts striped in two colors to symbolize their objectivity. One of the head priests would then throw a metal offering into the sky to see if the gods were ready. If the offering fell back down then the ritual was started.

The futball itself, an inflated bag of animal skin, would be taken by one of the teams and kicked down the field. There the other team would catch it and run back towards the first team, who by now was running towards the second team. When they met it was a violent scene: the members of one team would purposefully run into members of the other team just to knock them down.

When one team managed to get the futball under or over the altar, over the very physical objections of the other team, everyone who supported that team would issue forth prayers of praise. To guide the worshippers in their prayers vestal virgins would perform gymnastics and recite the appropriate prayer for the situation. The language of the prayers itself was couched in vague symbology, we still haven't deciphered "Waaaaaaaaa Eagle, Hey!", or "Shove that ball across the line, shove it, shove it!" The individual worshippers would also make up prayers of their own: "Punt, damnit!", or comment aloud on the geneology, physical attributes, habits and other intimate details of the various members of the teams.

When the futball ritual was half over, as indicated by a large animated sign, called a "skorebored," one of the head priests would fire a weapon into the air to scare the teams off the field. The skoreboard was one of the highest objects in the stadium, to be closer to the heavens, and was the device that the gods used to communicate their thoughts on the ritual. When the worshippers were disappointed with the skoreboard they wouldn't blame the gods aloud, instead they

shifted their abuse to the head priests.

Before the teams were allowed to come back on the field musicians would run out on the field. Once there they would play their instruments loudly and form images with their bodies. This was done apparently to chase off any evil spirits and demons that might have accumulated during the ritual.

Then the teams would come back on the field and finish the ritual. After it was all over the worshippers would go their separate ways until the next football time. Usually they would carry off talismans and relics representing the team that they supported.

There are several interpretations of the football ritual. One school of thought states that the football itself represents man. The members of the teams represent the gods. The ritual shows that while man is no more important than an inflated animal skin to the gods, while he is often kicked about in life, he is essential. For without the football, without man, there would be no purpose to the ritual of football, no purpose for the existence of the universe.

Another interpretation acknowledges that the football represents man. But, it claims that the initial kick represents the violence of birth. Thereafter man is kicked about and torn



between good and evil, but if the man leads a moral life he will eventually go to his reward, with the poles of the altar representing heaven.

These rituals took place during harvest season. During all this time the various communication medias would be blanketed with various members of various teams advocating various teams. And much information about the outcome of other rituals being enacted across the country would also be widely disseminated.

Every non-growing season another idol would gradually assume more importance than football, while the football was slowly climaxed. This new idol was called "basket-bal." Basket-bal is also played in a large temple, this one being enclosed, whereas most of the stadiums were open-roofed.

This ritual also was played on a rectangle, usually wooden, and had altars at each end, but with different shapes from that of football.

In the basket-bal ritual the two teams would bounce and throw an orange spheroid until one team could put it through the circle that was part of the altar. The game is not completely understood. However, since the ritual is usually enacted during the time of the shortest days of the year, and the basket-bal itself is an organ spheroid, it is thought to be a form of winter solstice celebration. Many religions, usually agrarian, have ceremonies on the shortest day of the year, winter solstice, to bring back the sun. Most of our scholars believe that the orange, spherical basket-bal represents the sun. The present basket-bal ritual being a degenerated of stylized version of the winter solstice ceremony.

During the planting season a new god would take precedence. This god was called bais-bal. At this point in time very little is understood about this ritual. Some attempts have been made to link it to an old fertility rite; but in all honesty, we really don't understand it.

A few minor deities also existed in their mythology. The "uneven parallel bars," "Three metre bored," and "hundred yard dash" are but a few examples. Most of these exist in name only. Thus it will be a considerable time before complete understanding of these sports exists.

Brown appears to have served some secondary function as preparation for life besides religious. There were even some buildings dedicated toward teaching engineering. But this was apparently a holdover from some previous time. In no way, shape, form or manner could these buildings have held all those enrolled in engineering. Those in charge of Brown realized this fact. Yet the prime purpose of Brown remained forefront in their mind, and any money that might have gone for such material things as engineering went selflessly toward the real reason for Brown's existence: football. In fact there were even plans to tear down the present engineering buildings and erect parking places for the personal land transportation devices of the thousands that came to see every football ritual.

Not all religions at Brown were held in an organized manner. Every growing season everyone except the eggheads and the wimps would give up any pretense at trying to learn anything material. Instead they swilled vast quantities of "Bud," "Mickel-lobe," and "Coors" and go out to practice their hand at such rites as: "Raising hell," "making out," and "partying." It was quite apparent that many of these rituals descended from fertility rites.

Not all Terrans practiced different rituals with every season. Some constantly practiced football, while some always practiced raising hell. Some managed to combine rituals, like raising hell and football. Some practiced nothing, ever. Those Terrans were usually ignored.

In conclusion, your majesty, we feel that the Terrans were, on the whole, a very devout race. Yet the Terrans as individuals and as a race were highly contradictory and complex. There is strong evidence for highly intelligent individuals who tried to lead the Terrans down the road of peace and progress. The question, as yet unanswered, that remains in the forefront of our minds is why they destroyed themselves.

One wonders where they went astray.



drawing by James Vance



etching by Cindy Skinner

a rumour of dogs

i'm about to have an impression
of a premonition—here it comes:

miranda's a gibson girl in 1984
and i'm a kazoo player in the string section

of the manzanar symphony orchestra.
outside the family wolfhound gnaws a bone

of the deceased. miranda likes the stutter of static;
she very seldom really speaks to me—

she's maintaining radio silence. in her sleep
she mumbles about burundi and rwanda:

awake, she can't even talk about herself
with much conviction. benny goodman's moonglow

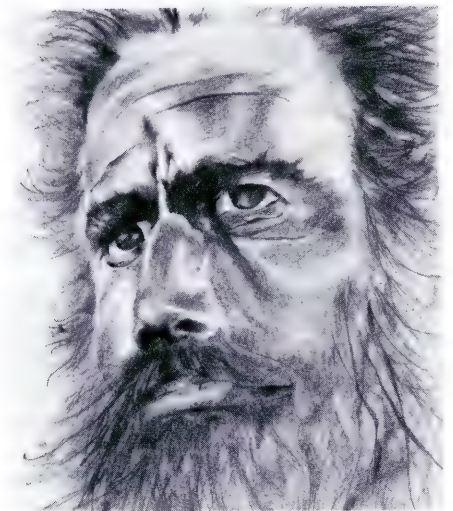
is turning on the phonograph. upstairs grandma sleeps,
practicing for the death we all know is coming.

—A.J. Wright

Solar Sailor

sails billow in unfelt breezes
ethereal yachts cruise through black silent waters
pushed along from Pluto to Pleiades
by the microcosmic pressure of radiation
streaming from the suns
—Macrocosmic Mylar Movement—
solar sailors spins outrageous yarns
of Easy Women in starports
and the long lonely months between
trapped cramped confined
they sing of the terrors of
radiation storms galactic hurricanes
gravitational maelstroms
of tantalizing superterrestrial tasted wine
and the lips of their wives
so very far away
they sing of the steely eyes
of the Polaran Pirate
and his dreaded dreadnought
blazing through the drifting nebulae
two light years before the mast
one a cosmic clipper ship
and oh to be a solar sailor!

—Michael Sherrod



drawing by Anne Leech

Government,
Technology,
Education, and
Backgammon.

Every morning I hear
empty words to fill
the empty spaces
in our heads.

And tomorrow
when the tests have
all been passed,
Kermit will still be
wondering what it

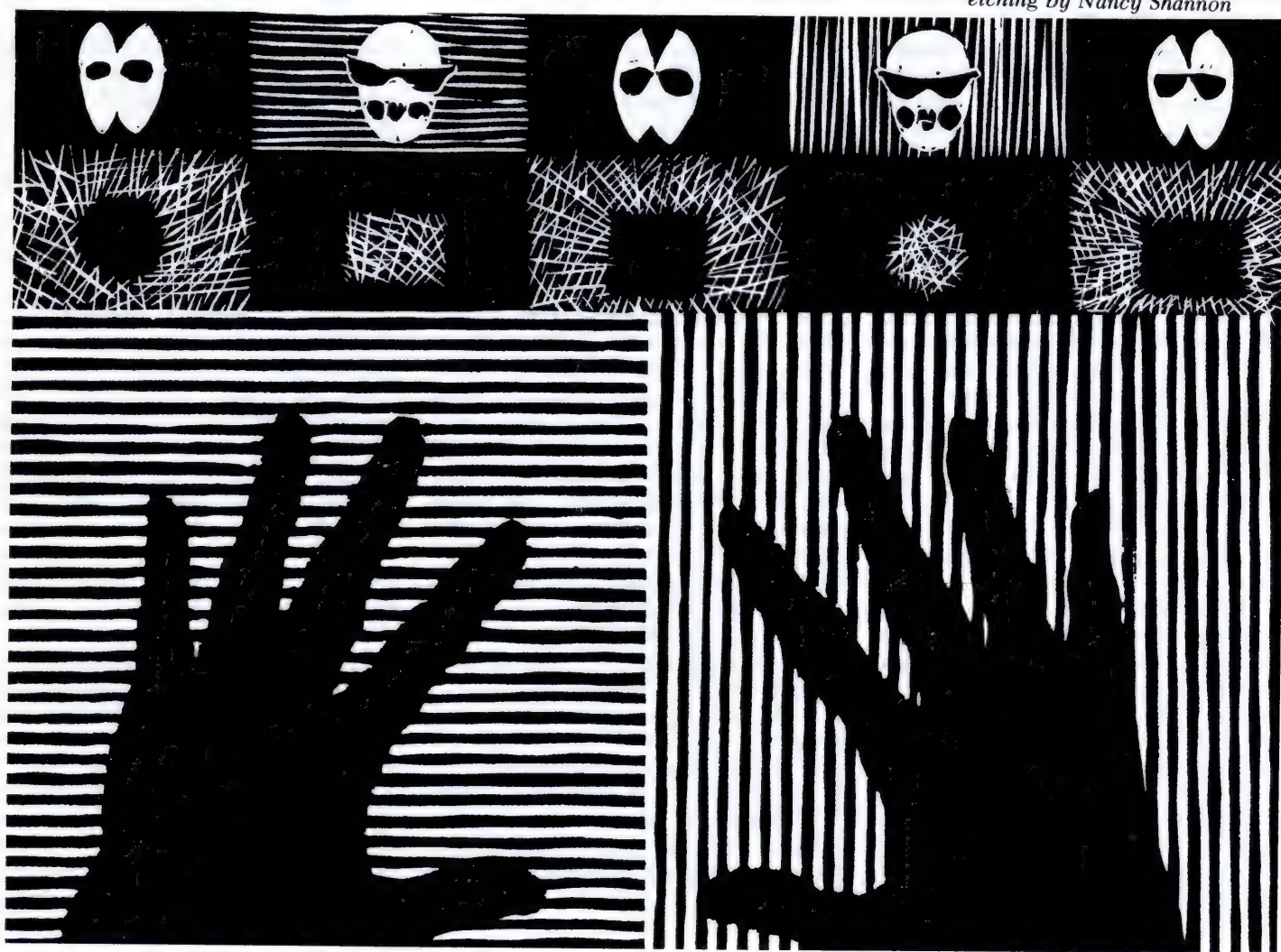
all meant.

Sometimes I think
all this knowledge
will end up in a
Black Hole.
Sucked up to nothing
after long, hard years
of spitting it out.

—Kathanne W. Greene



etching by Nancy Shannon



linocut by Tim Walker

The View From The Other Side

The Circle's Issac Joyner interviews a British exchange professor, bringing insight into differences between higher education here and in Great Britain.

Frank Jellett is a Briton on an exchange teaching program at Auburn. His new position and relocation came about through a chain of contacts that began with a former graduate student from Auburn named Mike Reed who was travelling in Europe. Jellett says he "jumped at the chance" to make the exchange. He had been a lecturer at Chelsea College, a small independent branch of the University of London. Dr. Gregory Cox of Auburn is now in London filling that position. Jellett, whose specialty is functional analysis, is now teaching undergraduate courses like MH 160 & 161. In this interview with the Circle's Isaac Joyner, Jellett makes some illuminating comparisons between the academic system in England and in the United States, and talks about exams, sports, money, the Greek system, and student politics.

Q: What were your first impressions of the South?

A: I flew into Atlanta last September 6. That was the first time I'd ever been to the United States at all. Of course, you hear a lot about the United States in Europe through movies, TV, and reading books and magazines, so you sort of know roughly what to expect. The weather was quite...well, not a surprise really, but much, much hotter than I'm used to, though this fitted into my stereotypical idea of the South, actually. Q: Do you, and the British as a whole,

have stereotypical ideas about the South?

A: Yes, I think so. You think of the South as anything but good weather, really. My image was sort of a dusty place with old racial attitudes prevailing. Of course they still do, but it's not quite so obvious around here because there don't seem to be very many blacks around. It's probably artificial though. That might be a regret because this is such a white, middle class university. The Americans you tend to meet in England, most of them, are from the East, and some from the West coast. You do not meet too many people from any of these middle areas, the South or the Midwest. There are quite a lot of New Yorkers who travel to London, and most of them have never been to the South. They just joke about it. They don't know what they are talking about either. I visited New York during the Christmas break and found myself curiously defensive about the South, as if I were a Southerner and had to stick up for it when I was talking to the Easterners up there.

A: Does a British high school better prepare English students for college than do American high schools?

A: The structure is different. A far smaller proportion of people go to college in England, because there aren't so many colleges to start with. There isn't the opportunity with the result that the people who do go to college tend to be beyond average, educated to a high standard.

Q: Describe the college entrance exam system.

A: There is a thing called the General Certificate of Education which is held at two levels, the "O" level, for ordinary, and the "A" level for advanced. You take the "O" level at age 16, the other at 18. Different colleges have different requirements as to what grade you must make on the "A" level exam to be admitted.

Q: Would an "O" level student be better prepared than an Auburn freshman?

A: I would think so...it's difficult to say. But here you get some people who are self-educated, and others who hardly know anything. The course I was teaching, MH160, is an "O" level type of thing in England. I think the answer to that would be yes. Of course the college curriculum doesn't insist on any type of general education as they do here. The idea is that your general education is taken care of in high school.

Q: Do you think that is a good assumption?

A: Yes and no. If you go to a reasonably good college, you are surrounded by educated people and the education takes care of itself. You experience cross-currents of intellectual activity.

Q: Do British universities attempt to give a liberal arts education or a specific education such as engineering?

A: The actual courses would be pretty specific, say in engineering, with no

obligation on the part of the student to attend any other courses apart from engineering. But he would have picked up a bit more general knowledge, perhaps in his high school. All these things are changing; levels are coming down for the most part. You sort of educate yourself by circulating among educated people, I suppose.

Q: Does the British class structure allow only the elite to go to college?

A: I don't think that depends on class so much. The people you find in a college are pretty much a cross-section. The feeling is that a lot of people don't go to college because they figure they'll do better by going straight to work. They figure it wouldn't do them any good--why spend three years in poverty when they could be out earning? Some people think that here, but it doesn't seem to be so prevalent.

Q: Do people go to college in England to get a better job, or a liberal education?

A: It's a mixture; if you come from educated people who value education, you will grow up thinking it's a good idea to go to college for its own sake, and make vocational training secondary. We also have a thing called "Poly-technics", which are not exactly universities, but are similar.

Q: Like a junior college?

A: No. They are really indistinguishable from a university, though they were different in the past. They are just run in a slightly different way. The courses tend to be much more practical things. In England the universities will do pure science and the humanities, while the Poly-technics will do all the very specific technological type courses. People who go there would be going to train, as an expert in micro-processors, for instance.

Q: Is there a British equivalent of the Greek system?

A: No, that is one thing I had heard of. I knew they existed here, but there just isn't really, no. And the use of terms like freshman, sophomore, junior, and senior--freshman, I suppose, is used a bit, but it's thought to be a bit "precious." I had this idea that the origins of the Greek system came from Europe, and maybe they did, but certainly they don't now.

At Oxford and Cambridge you've got, say, 15 or 20 "colleges," each one with about 400 students. When you go to Oxford or Cambridge you apply to a specific college, like Christ Church or Brasenose College, and although all the courses are available for everyone, you live in the college, and take your meals there. The teaching is administered from the college. The way they do it is you go to classes and you'll have a tutor who you will see once a week. The tutor will assign work for you to do. In English you'll take him an essay once a week, with math you work problems for him. You take them to him once a week and he'll look them over. You'll ask him about any difficulties you've been having with your class work. The classes are lectures, purely and simply.

Q: What about exams?

A: You have one large exam. Again, over the year you do this work, week by week. At the end of the year you take something called "the exams" and you must pass those to go on to the next year. At the end of your three years you take some really important exams. You might have seven or eight three-hour papers in the space of a week. How you do on those determines your degree. They are classified as 1st, 2nd, and 3rd class degrees.

Q: How many students go to Oxford or Cambridge?

A: They each have about 10,000 students. They are not on the scale of the

places you get here.

Q: Auburn seems to be the equivalent of a British university and a Poly-technic.

A: Yeah, it would be. It's like the two rolled into one... There are aspects of American colleges that simply don't exist in English ones, like the facilities, emphasis, and general interest in sports.

Sports in an English college are for recreation. You might get some people who are quite good at it, but people just do it as they want to, for fun. There is no recruiting. Nobody would dream of spending a Saturday afternoon watching a college team. It's almost like football here is professional. There just isn't the money for all these things at the British colleges.

Q: Do the British colleges have a parallel to our SGA?

A: That's more reminiscent of the sort of thing you would find in English universities. Each college has its "student union" with its president and various officers. They are in charge of running the entertainments, organizing the recreational sports, etc.

Q: Do the student unions have any effects on student life?

A: It acts as a kind of negotiative body with the authorities, regarding rules in the dorms and those kind of things. One thing that is always an issue in British universities is the level of student grant. You see, every student--or 90 percent anyway--gets a grant from the government to finance their studies. They get their tuition paid and also something to live on. The student unions are always trying to get the government to give them more. Also student politics is regarded as a good preparation for national politics, so if you do well in the student union, you might venture to try for Parliament or local politics.



Primal Scream

sallow faces line the walls
demon-countenance
twisted and bent
growing grinding gnashing
And there in the middle the air is rent
And there stand I
the goblins gape and giggle and guffaw
bug-eyes bulging
poking pulling pinching prying
demanding things I cannot in conscience give

They all draw closer
laughing screaming
broken sword and burnished shield
brandished high and there well shook
before descending deliberately downward
And then
(I do not cannot will not believe)
And then
(I do not will not cannot care)
And then
(primal scream)

—Michael Sherrod

Decisions And Revisions

By Judy Sheppard

She didn't want company. But she didn't want to be alone. That was why she was here at this bar with her brother, a big, bluff companionable man, who would buy her drinks, leave her alone, and ask no questions. She could sit in a corner and be as happily miserable this last time as she liked. After all, what were bars and brothers for?

It was the end of a hot day in late March, spring break. Karen had begun her yearly tan that morning and chafed a little under her thin embroidered shirt, feeling a little feverish and sore, and cupped the cool glass appreciatively. So far, so good. Bob had found a friend as soon as they walked in—a handsome, mustachioed dandy in a three-piece suit—and although there were no dim corners in this crowded place where she could wipe a brave tear away, there were a lot of bar stools, and the bar was dark enough to hide in. She seemed forgotten in this misty, smoky cave, she no longer knew anybody in her hometown, and she was invisible. All that was fine. All she'd wanted was a drink, a smoke, and a toast to her last love affair. She might even receive divine inspiration on her thesis on T.S. Eliot: these things happened to the very drunk. She could watch the scene in all the mirrors she faced, think until the liquor soaked her brain-cells, and act very cold to anything remotely male. All except the bartender, of course: one must make sacrifices.

Misanthropic, in the narrowest form of the word, had set in. In a month, probably less, Karen would be interested in the young men floating by, in the interesting-looking couples bent over their glasses and whispering together, interested perhaps even in Bob's talkative, nervously energetic friend who stood by them at the bar. Except for that three-piece suit. It reminded her a little too poignantly of Paul, best-dressed graduate student. Even so, she knew, she might later have joined cheerfully in with the conversation, matched strategies and vanities, and be calmly certain that men, too, knew what an attractive and absurd charade it all was. But not now. She was tired, pleasantly morosely tired, the way her writer-friend Jim was when he stepped across the hall from his office into hers and said: "I'm sick of this shit. I want to get married." No more careful moving of the pieces to arrive only at check and checkmate, no more pretty poses. Yes: that was the right idea. Marry 'em and forget 'em.

"Oh, sorry. Gary, this is my sister Karen." Bob turned to her suddenly, jostling her elbow. "She's a grad student. Teaches freshman English."

"Oh yeah? I really hated English," Gary said, shaking his well-groomed head. What an original response, Karen thought disdainfully. Next he'll be talking slowly to get the grammar right.

"She's working on her thesis now," Bob continued, like a proud father: Bob, who was impressed by college, though he'd never wanted to go there. He had a high-paying electronics job with telephone company. "Who's it on, Kare?"

Oh, God. "T.S. Eliot," she answered. Who? this guy will ask.

"Who?" Gary asked.

"A poet. Just a poet." Karen turned back to her drink with virtuous contempt. Men: how predictable. I have known them all, known them—Don't quote, Karen, a warning voice in her head told her sternly. This isn't the proper place. If you have to explain the joke—or quote—it's no good.

Gary, with a shrug, had turned back to Bob. They were, of course, talking baseball and spring training and the fishing in the nearby Gulf. Karen ignored them and watched the bartender absently: Nice build. Nice beard. He was a big handsome blond who danced a little by himself to the stereo music as he whirled busily from tap to blender. She tasted her drink again judiciously: Mediocre.

You *are* hard to please tonight, her little mocking voice told her. Is this how aging playboys feel, when it's all too much damn trouble? It was no longer even lovesickness, this mood; it was melancholy, a sweet affected word that conjured up pale long-haired ladies with old, tear-splotched love letters in their hands. It had been like this after the first trauma, two weeks or so of crying in Jim's office or drinking grimly alone in the afternoons after teaching or in bars with friends (other bars, not the one much like this place where she and Paul had met every Friday afternoon). She had been two people: a brittle gaiety and a too-ready laugh and a determined exuberance had characterized one of them, the one who might run into Paul in the hallways; a quiet moody martyr at other times, courageously carrying on. All that should pass, just like this self-serving surly, unsociable posture she's chosen tonight. Before long, men would be the same funny, interesting creatures she's always found them—ah, but now, now: Karen lifted her glass to herself in the mirror. Now, self-pity was a wonderful thing.

What is there to say about 'Prufrock,' anyway? she thought suddenly, brow furrowing in anxiety. Was there anything the critics and Ezra Pound had missed? Graduate student unlocks key to Eliot's poetry. Articles published, a prestigious teaching job assured, Paul made aware of the chance he'd missed—

"Hey—you awake?" Bob asked, prodding her gently. He was alone again, finishing off his beer. "I think you make Gary nervous," he added, with a wink that made Karen wince. "He's talking a blue streak."

"Oh—is he gone?"

"Just the john. He'll be back." Another wink.

"Could I have another, please?" Karen asked painfully, avoiding that knowing smile.

"Sure. Bill, another Marguerita and a draft. Yeah, he'll be back. Told you I'd show you a good time, didn't I?"

Oh, God, Karen thought again. "I thought we got this straight when I got to your place tonight," she said, pronouncing her words with emphasis. "I don't want to have

Second Place

Sigma Tau Delta Fiction Contest

a good time. Okay?"

"Yeah, yeah," Bob nodded, smiling, sipping his beer.

Karen sighed and stared into the poisonous green of the tequila. Can't I just mope, for heaven's sake? she thought, watching the bartender, who was, after all, very nice-looking. I'm just not interested. Then, from nowhere: What exactly had happened, anyway? Her usual rashness, her impatience—wanting too much? Oh, forget about it, her mental counselor snapped. It's all over now.

"What's that you're drinking?" Sure enough, Gary was back.

"Margaritas." Karen rubbed her sun-chapped lips where the salt stung them.

"See Stu lately?" Bob was asking with great unconcern.

"Yeah. He left about five minutes before you walked in."

Gary watched Karen nurse her lip gently with a careful finger.

"Hey there!" he said to a waitress, who flitted by, ignoring him. In the mirror, Karen watched him shrug and continue.

"He had his fiancée and this red-haired chick with him."

(Chick? Karen thought. Somebody still says "chick"?)

"A redheaded one? With big—" Bob paused, glanced at Karen with grinning apology, and went on. "Oh, man! Is that the one?"

"Yeah. She a friend of yours?"

"I wish," Bob said gloomily, downing his beer and waving for another. "Where'd they go?"

"Bayou Lounge."

There was a pause. Karen looked up apprehensively. "No. No thanks." She shook her head emphatically and lit a cigarette with the defiant air of a man smoking his last before a firing squad. "That's all I need. No. Just drop me off at your place to pick up my car. I've had enough to drink already."

"Hey, you'd like this place," Bob said heartily. "Really classy—old, with bowls of boiled shrimp and bluegrass music—"

"Thanks, Bob. But no. You go."

"I didn't bring you here just to dump you," Bob answered with an injured air. "Forget it. It doesn't matter. We'll just stay here."

"Look, Bob, if you want to go, I could always—" Gary began.

"Telephone, Gary. Back of the bar," said the waitress, passing by again with a gleaming tray of drinks. Gary set down his Scotch and water and disappeared; Karen drew a relieved breath. She turned to her brother, tugging at his sleeve.

"Listen." She was speaking with that careful enunciation of an English teacher who was rapidly getting blitzed. "I don't want to go to the Bayou, and I think you ought to. Just walk in, you know, very coolly, and there you are." Bob had spoken of the red-haired girl before they'd left his apartment that night—a girl he's met the night before at an engagement party for Stu and his fiancée; so behind her panic at having to handle Gary there was real concern. There was the sight of Bob, a man sloping toward his late thirties, unmarried, tired, his optimistic What-me-worry? act getting a little grim. Why the hell shouldn't somebody in this family have some luck? She felt like a cheerleader urging on a reluctant over-the-hill athlete. And then, annoyingly, there was Gary again, looking exaggeratedly distressed and indignant.

"Hey, Bill! Another Scotch. Can I get you a drink?" he asked Karen, who nodded resignedly and gave him a cursory

smile. The brother and sister were immersed in gloomy silence; Gary didn't seem to notice, as he favored them with a confidence.

"That was this girl," he told them. "I said to her, just last night, 'Listen.'" He struck a firm pose. "I said to her, 'It was nice, what we had,'" he paused dramatically, "'but we don't have it no more.'" She just can't get it. She thinks I'm playing, playing hard-to-get. Women these days! It's all games."

"How's that again?" Karen asked, looking at him as sharply as she could through blurred eyes.

"Games. You know, I guess it started with Women's Lib. Things are all screwed up now. I mean, you can't just meet somebody nice and sit and talk anymore. It's got to be," he struck a pose like an actor coming through an imaginary door and delivering lines, "'Hello, I'm Gary. Want to go to bed, chick?' You know what I mean?"

Is this guy real? Karen wondered, too amazed and amused



etching by Deborah Allen

to be offended. "Sure," she nodded. "I know what you mean." She smiled broadly into her drink.

"I thought you would," he said. "I can tell what people are like, just looking at them, you know? That's why I'm such a good salesman. That's what I do. Anyway, I can tell you're different."

Karen thought, as Bob interrupted to quiz Gary about the

redhead: I haven't heard such a line in my whole life. You're not like all the others. There's something different about you. You're something...special. Boy! How many men had said that to how many women, and vice versa, and how many of their besotted listeners had opened eyes wide and said: "Oh, do you really think so?" And *then* we go to bed. Right, Gary? she thought savagely, puffing away in disgust. We all want to believe so much that we *do* believe. People!

"Yeah, well, that's what I told her," Gary was continuing to her brother. "'There's no break like a clean break, baby.' Right?"

Right, Gary. Karen caught herself nodding and stopped. There's had been a clean break, no blood or mess till hours later. As usual, she'd jumped for the jugular: she was so good at that. God, had she been rash! Well, why hadn't he stopped her? Well, who cares? I am shrugging at myself in the mirror, she thought in sudden alarm, hastily straightening her spine. Nobody had seemed to notice.

"Gary. Phone," the bartender said, walking by, he tone not pleasant.

"Damn," Gary said, sliding off his stool. "I mean, can't some people *understand* things?" He faced Bob and Karen, hands and eyes raised to the ceiling in supplication. "I mean..." He paused, as if about to deliver some vast profundity, and, overwhelmed by it, could not. He just shook his head, too world-weary to speak. "I'd better go to the phone," he said nobly, and disappeared into the smoky crowds.

Karen turned to Bob urgently. "Please," she said, talking fast and desperately. She knew she had the earnest look of a drunk, which she was, but went on anyway. "I just wanted a drink and a change of atmosphere, and I got it, and let's get out of here, okay? Please. I don't like this guy."

"Who, Gary?" Bob said absently. "He's harmless."

"Bob. Let me try to explain this to you. He's a bore. Tonight I want to be a bore—by myself. You want to go to the Bayou. Now why are we staying here?"

"Just cool off," Bob said, watching a girl walk past. "Have another drink. I'll be back in a minute."

Karen rubbed the rim of her glass and licked off the salt with a masochistic despair. She knew that look of Bob's that set jaw, that disappointed damn-it expression. And her mental persecutor sneered at her from the smoky mirror. You hypocrite. You're here for the same reason he is: pride. You were too worried about some faceless girlfriend of Paul's six hundred miles away to enjoy what was just down the hall, and that's why you're here, sentimentally drinking Margueritas, you classic dumbo. She thought about Bob, in terms she couldn't face while sober. A sensitive, shy, lonely man who hid behind that wink and his bluff heartiness, who drove a flashy car and lived in a flashy singles' complex and who had nothing much left but his flash. Alone and getting older. For one minute out of this night of sham sorrow, her heart swelled with bitter compassion: the good guy, the proud brother who thought she was a real whiz because she was in graduate school, who gave her money when her salary ran out—because he understood pride—who offered her words of cliched, trite, caring advice. Who wrote very bad poems out of his loneliness for her to read, who always had some great scheme on the stove, some great-looking woman in the next bar. I wish I could get my hands on that redhead, Karen thought with mother-tiger savagery. I'm just drunk enough

to do it, to tell her what a sweet, generous, lonely—

"Man, oh man." Gary reappeared, and Karen stared at him as if a fish had just walked up out of this underwaterish mist and started confiding in her. "Women! Some people—"

"Just don't know when to quit?" Karen suggested, her sweetness just a little too pronounced.

Gary looked at her sharply, but couldn't really see her face; he apparently decided to take her words literally. "Right. She thinks I'm just kidding around, man! It's—"

"All games," Karen chanted with him in unison. A silence fell.

"Right," he said, a little less firmly.

Bob drifted back, nodded for another beer. Gary



continued his discourse on life. "Now take that chick over there." All three looked around the curve of the bar at a stunning blonde who'd walked in just before Karen and Bob: she looked really gorgeous in this murky light, with a sleek long black dress and a broad gold choker. A husky fair-haired man in a red parka was striking a match for her; she cupped her hand around his as she guided the flame to her cigarette. "Now, that lady knows the ropes. She wrote the damn *rules* of the game." Gary shook his head virtuously; Karen watched the woman with interest. I wonder how much older she is than me, she thought, and clutched her cold glass.

Gary followed Karen's gaze and misread the look on her face for detached contempt. "Yeah. You know, I came from a small town. When I got here, I really had a rude awakening."

"And human voices wake us, and we drown," Karen answered. "Oh, never mind. It's a saying among English majors." I'm absolutely bombed, she thought from a distance. Who is this three-pieced guy, anyway? Where are all my friends to whom I could spout trite pieces of poetry, be instantly understood, and told to shut up? Curiouser and curiouser, drunker and drunker; the bar was beginning to look like a scene from *Looking for Mr. Goodbar*, especially with that blonde here, Ghost of Christmas Future...and where had Bob gone?

"You don't talk much, do you?" Gary inquired, sipping sulkily at his Scotch.

"Hmm?" Karen tried to look awake. "Look, don't mind me tonight. I'm just kind of moody."

"Yeah?" he said, a nasty note creeping in his voice. "I

must be imposing on you or something. Yeah, I'm imposing like hell."

Karen regarded him through a green-and-salt-rimmed haze. Imposing? You're not even here. "Just forget about me, okay?" she said kindly. "I'm not fit company right now."

Bob floated toward them in the mirror; he was laughing, Karen was glad to see. "Cajun Jack, what a wild man," he said, and began some off-color joke he'd just been told. Karen watched the blonde thoughtfully, apprehensively: she seemed to be swimming toward them, pausing to speak to another overdressed woman (I have heard the mermaids talking, each to each...) She was coming toward them, and stopping behind Karen, sliding a white manicured hand over Gary's charcoal lapel, pulling him aside. Bob, shrugging, yelled for another beer and got no answer to his offer of another drink. Karen was too busy watching the scene in the mirror; she was coquettish, Gary cajoling; she demurred, he persisted; he produced a card, she wrote something on it and gave it back, kissed him lightly but lingeringly on the cheek, and seemed to drift out with a tide of others leaving through the heavy frosted-glass doors. Games, he says? she thought in amazement. He should know!

"Bob," she whispered, tugging at him again, "I'm really smashed. Can't we..."

"Bill." The bar manager, a short serene-faced man Karen had met before, was pausing at their shoulders. "Bob's sister needs another drink."

"Oh, thanks, but—" Karen stopped; the drink was put down in front of her, sea-green. "Well, thanks," she smiled.

"Hon, with that smile, it's on the house." The manager moved away, and Karen regarded his back with approval. There, that's it: detached flirtation, tribute paid and received, compliments without debts. Not many Margueritas were free in this life, she thought profoundly, thinking of the many she and Paul had drunk to salute the weekend. Forget about it, her voice nagged her again, but she was listening to the music: Fleetwood Mac—You can go your own way, go your own way. Hadn't she said something like that, only nastier? And to how many others, these past twenty-three years, so that she ended up in this bar, with her brother, and fair game for this three-pieced jerk named Gary? Who, by the way, was regarding his card with a vague smile and slipping it into his vest pocket, preening like a peacock. And will I become that blonde, slipping in and out of bars alone, scribbling apartment numbers on business cards for conceited young studs? Why must we do this: why us, why be used? Alone at night, she's glimpsed the real thing, real loneliness, not this mockery of it she was making now, and she felt no contempt for that blonde—only a creeping, prophetic fear, and a dismal understanding.

Gary, straightening his vest, cleared his throat.

Karen favored him with an unpleasant smile. "Games," she said.

"Who, her?" he said, looking surprised and guilty at the same time. "I'll go out with her when I'm drunk enough." He shrugged. Karen shrugged. Jim was right. Get married. At least—well, no, at *best* you probably won't be sitting in bars, or having words like that said about you when you leave. She looked over at Bob, who was smoking and talking to some tall guy in a weird Western outfit. I wish he'd get married. I'm glad as hell I'm *not* married. After the bloody ripping of ties away, there had come a pleasant

solitude—and she wanted it now. She watched, dismayed, as Bob put down his mug and headed for the Men's Room. He grows old, she thought suddenly, frighteningly sober. He grows old.

"Listen, Karen. I'd like to talk to you." Gary sat down on Bob's stool, suddenly all business.

Karen looked at him, sending up a small prayer. Please, God. Let him tell me about his empty life and love's labor lost, so I can sympathize and even be nice to him. Let him tell me something like that. But that, of course, was not what he meant at all.

"I can't figure you out." He was quiet, grave, hurt. "I just wanted to talk to you, you know?"

"Look, Gary," she said patiently. "You're really nice." (What are you *saying*? her voice demanded.) "I'm just not in a talkative mood. Okay?"

He looked rather dissatisfied with this answer. "Listen. I've had my chances tonight, you know? I could be having a really good time tonight, right now. But I thought you looked...interesting. So I hung around. Why can't we just talk? Maybe go to a quieter place and just talk? You know what I mean?"

Karen tried to look as though she were considering this question carefully, pondering over its fine points, ready to deliver a brilliant reply. "Yeah," she answered.

"Okay!" he said triumphantly, as if a major breakthrough had been reached. "So why not just spend a little time with me? What do you say?"

What do I say? It is impossible to say just what I mean! Karen shook her head. "No," she answered.

It didn't work, she observed, astonished. The first time in her life she's actually been flat and rude with a man, and it didn't work. Gary did not seem discouraged; in fact, he began pouring out an argument that Karen followed with a brow furrowed with amused disbelief. He spoke of his world-weariness, his jaded experiences, his tireless, fruitless search for a good, intelligent, sensitive woman. (Not in so many words, of course, and punctuated with a good many "you know?"'s, but Karen got the drift.) He waxed eloquent. Karen waxed bored, then amused, then rather frantic; he wasn't ever going to stop. Tequila makes time stand still. How to shut him up by explaining that she was tired, she was observing a wake of her own making, and that a rebuffed romantic was the cruelest of cynics, so just save your breath? She finally just nodded to his "You know?"'s and listened to Joan Baez's pure voice rising above the clink and murmur of the bar. You were so good with words, and at keeping things vague. Ah, Paul weren't we both? And if so, why can't I tell this decidedly unPrufrockian character to neither dare or presume, that this is *not* the time? But there will be time, she promised herself, catching a glimpse of Bob coming toward them. There will be time.

"Okay?" Gary finished up triumphantly.

"Ready to go, Kare?" Bob asked, a little too heartily. He was regarding them with a vague alarm. Do not ask what it is, she wanted to tell him, but was too drunk to do anything but nod and grope for her purse and cigarettes.

"Hey, you know what, big brother?" Gary said suddenly, watching Karen fumble and rise uncertainly to her feet. "Your little sister here just put me down. I mean, really down."

"Oh, come on, Gary—" Karen began, thought better of it, and turned desparately to her brother.

"Hey, you're pretty smashed," Bob said jovially, holding her up by an arm and giving her that godawful wink: Told you I'd show you a good time, didn't I? "Bill, can I have my tab?"

Gary was watching virulently, silently, almost jerking with hurt vanity and rage. He snatched the tab from the bartender's hand and pocketed it. "I'll take care of it," he snapped.

"What?" Bob said, blankly. "Hey, it's a pretty hefty one. You don't need to—"

"Look." Gary cut him off with a chop of his hand. "I'm not good enough to buy your sister a drink?"

"Sure, sure. I'll even it up with you another time. Move it," Bob hissed to Karen, who seemed to wade forever till they reached the parking lot and clear, fresh air that snapped her awake like a slap. Bob unlocked the car door, opening it for her.

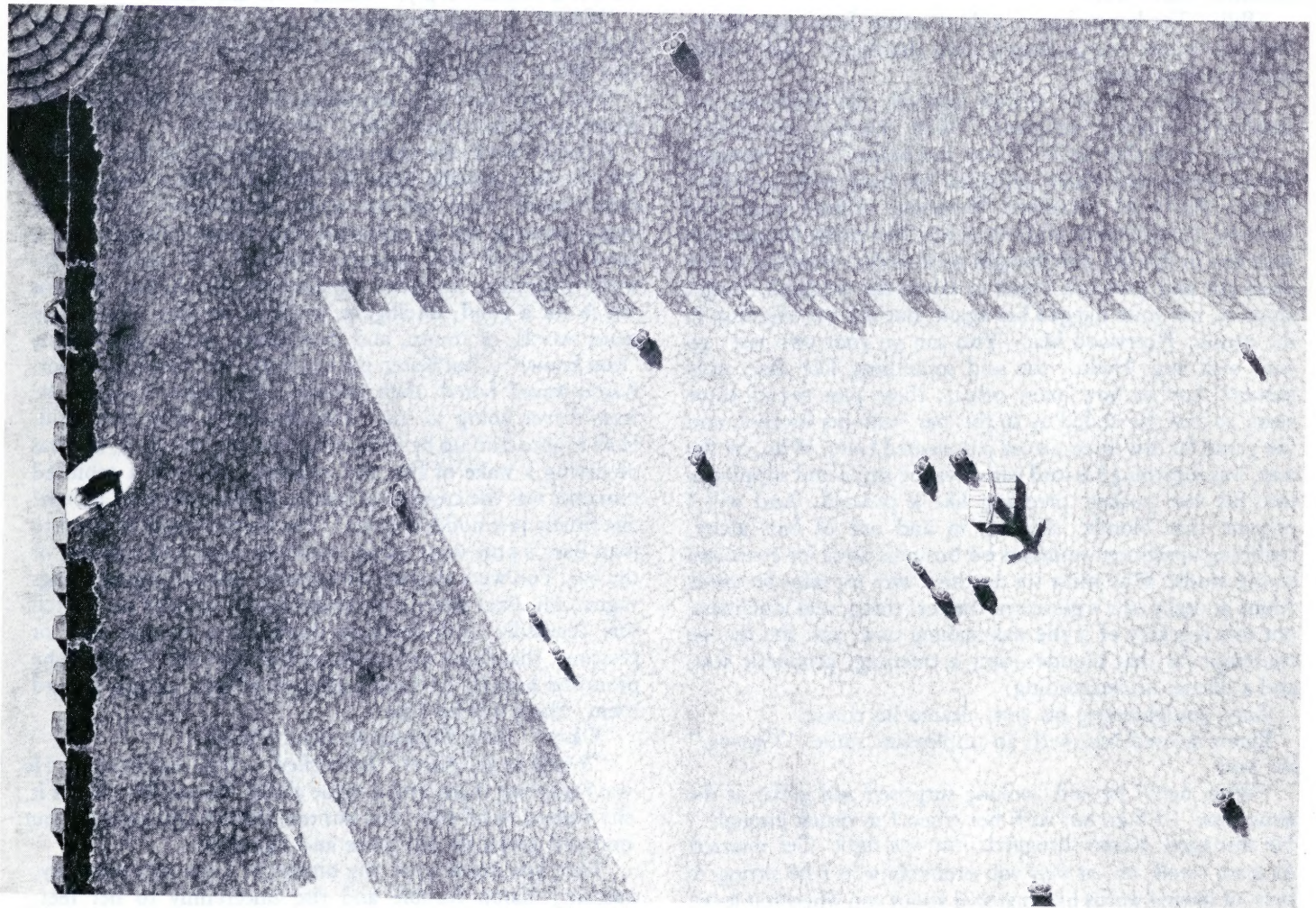
"What did you do to *him*?" he asked in amused amazement.

"That is a really strange person," Karen answered.

They drove back through the dead city in silence. Karen pondered with disbelief over the evening—the dreamy atmosphere of the bar, the earnest, sincere, utterly phony stranger, her blank inability to either communicate to him or stop him. So what *is* the answer? she wondered. She recognized finally, with a feeling like finding the answer to an important question circled in notes after the exam is over, that even Jim knew there was never any end, that the delicate balance of ego and empathy would always be delicate indeed with anyone, and that it was not Paul's fault or her fault or anybody's fault. There was nothing so simple as finding someone to pin to a lapel, to wear as ornament; and nothing so hard as waking up without drowning, as finding voices that spoke words she not only understood but believed.

"You know what?" Bob said suddenly, making an angry left-hand turn on a red light. "I'm sick of this shit. I want to get married."

Karen regarded him for a moment in silence. Then she lit a cigarette, leaned her head against the cushioned seat, and laughed.



lithograph by Brian Thompson



lithograph by Cecile Weatherly

